STUDIES
IN THE TANTRAS AND THE VEDA

M. P. PANDIT

GANESH & CO. (MADRAS) PRIVATE LTD.
MADRAS—17

ABOUT THE BOOK

This book consists of recent reviews of some of the latest books on Tantra Sastra and of Vedic literature, as also studies on certain aspects of culture and philosophy. The reviews are critical and informative and possess a characteristic literary merit. The book should serve as a signpost and a guide to further extensive reading of all the important books on Tantras and the Veda.

Rs. 6.00

STUDIES
IN THE TANTRAS AND THE VEDA

STUDIES IN THE TANTRAS AND THE VEDA

M. P. PANDIT

GANESH & CO. (MADRAS) PRIVATE LTD.
MADRAS
1964

© M. P. PANDIT

Printed at
Lalitha Printers Private Limited, Madurai-1.

To

N. SUBBUNARAYANAN

"His nature is too noble for the world:
He would not flatter Neptune for his trident"

—*Shakespeare*

CONTENTS

PART I — THE TANTRAS

PAGE

Principles of Tantra ... 1

Mahānirvāṇa Tantra ... 22

Śri Lalitā Sahasra Nāma ... 34

The Guru–Śiṣya Tradition ... 40

Yoga Kuṇḍalinī Upaniṣad ... 56

Uttara Gīta ... 61

Rauravāgama ... 65

The Maṇḍala ... 69

Śankara and Tāntric Tradition ... 74

Chakras or Lotuses in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga ... 78

Indian Culture and the Tantra ... 92

PART II — THE VEDA

Puruṣa Sūkta ... 103

Godhead in the Rig Veda ... 112

The Nivids ... 118

Gāyatrī Upāsanā ... 123

The Veda and the Upaniṣad (A Question) ... 139

APPENDIX

The Nivids : Text ... 143

Principles of Tantra

IT is said that one night when Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was going to Dakshineshwar along with another person, it was pitch dark. He could not see the way. The companion, an adept in Tantra Sadhana, thereupon walked in the front and from his back emanated a light which lit up the path for Sri Ramakrishna. The Tantrik was an *upāsaka* of Agni-mantra and had acquired control over the *tattva* (element) of fire. This is not a rare happening among the votaries of the various Devatas in the Mantra Sadhana. It is an axiomatic truth in the Tantra Sastra—whose other name is Mantra Sastra—that a successful pursuit of a *Mantra upāsana* automatically brings to the practitioner a mastery over the element or principle governed by the Devata presiding over the particular Mantra. Thus by devoting oneself to the *Vāyu-mantra* one can control the operations of the element of *air*, by *Vāruṇa-mantra* acquire mastery over water and so on. The whole subject has been developed into a fine science by the ancients in India and in the heyday of its career this Sastra was looked upon with as much reverence and drawn upon with as much faith and effect as the lore of the Vedas. It was only during the general decline of the Hindu religion that a good deal of prejudice and misconception gathered round it following a fall in the standards of purity in its application even as the encrustation of later-day ceremonialism and sacerdotalism had come to conceal the real facet of the Veda in an earlier age. Of course the lack of understanding and ignorance on the subject of Tantra Sastra today is not as much as it was during the early years of the century when, for instance, even an organ of the 'Tantric Order of America", the *International Journal,* included in its list of Sanskrit and Tibetan Tantras the Panchatantra which, as everybody knows, is but a book of fables!

These are some of the interesting facts cited by Sir John Woodroffe (*Arthur Avalon* as he is known in this field of literature) in his classic edition of the *Tantra–Tattva* of Pandit Siva Chandra Vidyarnava Bhattacharya, now running into its third edition.[1] Entitled *Principles of Tantra,* this Volume is an English rendering (by Sri Jnanendralal Majumdar) of the original work in Bengali, edited by Sir John with illuminating Notes. It contains two lucid introductions by the editor and another—a brilliant exposition with sustained vigour and carrying conviction—by Sir Barada Kanta Majumdar, all the three running into 200 pages of a masterly survey of the vast subject of the Tantras.

---

[1] The original work in Bengali was first published in the nineties of the last century. The English rendering appeared under the editorship of J. Woodroffe in 1914 in two parts. The second edition (1954) published by Ganesh & Co., brought both the parts together in one volume, and the present publication, *Principles of Tantra* (pp. 787, Price Rs. 30.00, Ganesh & Co., Madras 17, India), is the third edition which sees the voluminous treatise in a still more handy form with a beautiful get-up.

The *Tantratattva* is both a defence and a challenge: defence against the unthinking attacks by modern secularists and 'reformists' of Indian religion, and a challenge to the rationalist to test for himself the claims of the hoary Tantra Sastra, a substantial part of which has been expounded in these pages, subject-wise, viz., Necessity and applicability of the Tantra Scripture, Historicity of the Tantra Sastra, Comparative estimate of the Veda, Vedanta and the Tantra and their interrelation, Guru, Mantra, Gayatri, Shiva Shakti, Image worship, Devatas, the Institution of Ceremonial worship etc. The author had intended to present the philosophy underlying the Tantra Sadhana in the third part of the work but he passed away before fulfilling his intention.

According to the Indian tradition each Age has its Scripture, *yuga-śāstra*, governing and leading the life of the people in the rightful direction. In the Satya Yuga (Golden Age),[1] says the *Kulārṇava Tantra*, the Scripture is Sruti, the Revealed Word, the Veda; in the Treta (Silver Age), Smriti, that which is remembered and promulgated by the Rishis in the form of Sastras and Smritis, in the Dvapara (Copper Age), the Puranas, treatises which convey the doctrines of the Vedas and Smritis in a popular garb, myth and story; in the Kali (Iron Age), the Tantra.[2]

---

[1] In the first Age, Dharma is conceived to be full in stature, in the second it declines by a quarter, in the third by half and in the last, the Kali Yuga, Dharma exists only a quarter.

[2] *Kṝte śrutyuktācāraḥ tretāyāng smṝtisambhavaḥ*
dvāpare tu purāṅoktang kalau āgamakevalam.

The Tantras are considered by their adherents as the Sastra supreme for the current age of Kali when mankind is labouring under a heavy load of *adharma*, Untruth and Unrighteousness. It is not practicable in this age, they point out,[1] to practise all the rituals and austerities enjoined in the Vaidic system. Neither the individual capacity of man nor the condition of the collective environment of modern societies is favourable to their practice. For men of such an age the Tantra Sastra provides the most practicable and sure guide for the achievement of the goal of life which lies not only in its liberation from the hold of Ignorance, *mukti*, but also in an ample satisfaction of its basic urges for self-existence, self-affirmation and the delight of their fulfilment, *bhukti*.

The Tantra Sastra has certain distinctive features which give it a wider appeal than the systems of the Veda. In the first place, it is catholic and open to all irrespective of their class or sex. No one is excluded from the shelter of the Tantras because of his birth; even a Chandala has a right to be initiated. The *Māhānirvāṇa Tantra* declares: "That low Kaula who refuses to initiate a Chandala or a

---

[1] "The Aryan life no longer exists in which every event, from the conception in the womb to the cremation of the body, was accompanied by Vaidik Mantra. A heavenly body which through the control of the passions, has become a suitable vehicle for the development of Brahma-knowledge according to Vaidik rules, is nowadays impossible of achievement. Foreseeing this, Siva revealed the path of Tantra, the Sadhana of which is framed to meet the needs and circumstance of the Kaliyuga, and varying temperament and proficiency of those who live in it." (P. 68)

Yavana into the Kaula Dharma, considering them to be inferior, or a woman, out of disrespect for her, goes the downward way. All two-footed beings in this world, from the *vipra* to the inferior castes, are competent for *kulācāra*." Women are as eligible for initiation as men are; not only that, some of the Tantras lay it down that initiation taken from a woman-guru is more effective than from a man, because the woman represents directly the world-mother who is the object of all worship.

Secondly, one need not have to undergo long periods of preparatory training as insisted upon in the Vedic and Vedantic lines of discipline before one is adjudged fit to be initiated into the regular sadhana. Not many are in a position to observe the various *vratas* and equip themselves with psychological purity, mental discrimination and detachment born of strenuous study and contemplation. The Tantra does not pitch itself so high in its demands. It recognises that men are in all stages of development; there are different natures and temperaments and each is to be led by the path natural to him. For this purpose it classifies men into three broad classes according to whether they are predominantly governed by Tamas, Rajas or Sattva Guna and prescribes different modes of discipline for them. To use their terminology, men are of three natures or temperaments: *paśubhāva*, animal type, *vīrabhāva*, hero-type, and *divyabhāva*, godly type and their lines of progress—*ācāra*—differ accordingly. Be it noted, however, that these types are not fixed; it is possible, by effort and progress, to pass into the next higher and eventually the highest stage even to one who starts at the lower end of Pashubhava.

Further, the Tantra Sastra is what is described as a *pratyakṣa śāstra*, a science which, like medicine and astrology, is verifiable at every step. It is a rational science based upon a doctrine or a set of doctrines which lends itself to be tested by any individual at any stage. Prior faith in the word of the Sastra is not indispensable. 'Practice what we say and see the results for yourself, then faith will be born'—says the Teacher of the Tantra.

There is, besides, a greater stress here on the practical side of the Sastra than in the traditions which exalt Knowledge, *jñāna*, above Action, *kriyā*. Knowledge is of course indispensable but for the right knowledge to dawn and be properly received and assimilated there is needed a precedent discipline which readies the system, a sadhana with its outer and inner ramifications which prepare and mould all the parts of man to the utmost degree of receptivity. The Tantra provides for a graded system of sadhana according to the competence, *adhikāra*, of the seeker. Puja, external worship with various *upacāras*, like flower, incense, offering etc., is the first stage; next comes Japa[1], repetition of Mantra

---

[1] "Meditating on the form of the Devata denoted by the Mantra, Japa should be made in the mind." (*Bhutaśuddhi Tantra*)

"A mantra should be repeated with faith, devotion, attention, submission, and perception of the Divine image in the mind." (*Kulārṇava Tantra*)

"Japa is of three kinds: *Vācika* (by audible words), *Upāmsu* (lips and tongue moving, but inaudible to the person making japa), and according to prescribed procedure; then Dhyana[1], mental contemplation, adoration; the last and the highest is the Brahmabhava or Brahmasadhana, attainment of the knowledge and feeling that one *is* Brahman and All is pervaded by Brahman.

The Tantra is remarkable also for another reason. It does not ignore the claims of the earth, the HERE, and preach flight to the heavens of bliss elsewhere. For the Tantrik this world here is as much real as the worlds elsewhere. All are manifestations of the One Shakti, One Divine. And if the Divine is real and can be the sole object of our seeking, equally real is the world manifested by the Divine[2] and to realise its full meaning is the

---

Mānasika mental (lips and tongue not moving). Japa has the supreme virtue of gradually withdrawing the mind from other thoughts and impressions, and fixing it on the Divine image. When concentration by this means is perfected, the consciousness of the sadhaka is transferred to the Mantra-devata. This is called *Mantracaitanya* (awakening of Mantra)." (Pp. 434–435).

[1] "Dhyana is of two kinds, *sthūla* (gross) and *sūkṣma* (subtle). Suksma or supersensuous, is Thy sound-body (*mantramayam deham*); Sthula is meditation on Thy image, which is made up of hands, feet, etc..." (*Yāmala*)

"Dhyana is of two kinds, *sarūpa* (having visible image) and *arūpa* (not having visible image). Thy *arūpa* dhyana is beyond the cognizance of speech and mind; it is unmanifested, all-pervading, incapable of being pointed out as 'this' or 'that'." (*Mahānirvāṇa Tantra*)

[2] "The Tantric sadhaka does not—in this unlike the Vaidik sadhaka—see a hell in the Samsara. The hateful and hideous picture which the Vaidik sadhaka has drawn of the Samsara...is enough to create a revulsion...Tantric sadhakas have discovered the play of the waves of Brahma-Bliss in this very Samsara, and have pointed out, as it were with a finger, that the very process of cause and effect which obtains in the Samsara is in a direct manner the stairway of Sadhana." (P. 144.)

purpose of our human birth.[1] The Tantras declare that the universe is not an illusion; it is an expression of Brahman. It is the 'material and the field for sadhana'. Rightly perceived it reveals, not veils Brahman.[2]

[1] Birth in the human body is rightly considered to be an event of crucial importance in the evolution of the soul. It is only the human being who gets the chance to exercise his faculties consciously and choose his destiny. He alone, among all created beings, can evolve in the direction he prefers. "There is no birth like unto the human birth. Both Devas and Pitris desire it. For the Jiva the human body is of all bodies the most difficult to come by. For this it is said that human birth is attained with extreme difficulty...of the Jiva's eighty-four lakhs of births the human birth is the most fruitful. In no other birth can Jiva acquire knowledge of the truth. Human birth is the stepping-stone to the path of liberation." (*Viśvasāra Tantra*)

[2] " 'The hall of sorrow', 'the vale of tears', 'the hall of torments" and other such names by which schools of transcendental philosophy disparage the world, have no place in the Tantra. The Tantra is the Breath of Divinity, and the world is evolved from that Breath. The Divine Mother (call Her Father or Father-Mother as you choose) is in every molecule, in every atom, in all things which constitute the world. In fact, She is the causeless Cause of whatever is; She is the manifested Brahman. The world is the playground (*Līlākṣetra*) of the All-blissful Anandamayi. The world is neither an illusion nor a non-reality; nor is it under the government of the Ruler of Hell...The Tantric sadhaka, by his method of worship, is led from the outset to feel, and then by a higher process of self-culture to realise, the All-blissful Mother in the universe—nay, to regard the universe as the Mother Herself. Every man and every woman is to him the Mother Herself; every living object is to him an object of obeisance. His thought and conduct are made to flow in that all-loving and all-reverencing channel. Training his mind thus, the sadhaka, far from finding the world to be a vale of tears, of sorrow, and of suffering, views it as the very Kashmir of subjective and objective beauty. Every man and woman—nay, all living things—are glowing with Divinity. This state of mind not only quenches the thirst of his lower nature, but spiritualises its animal tendencies; not only does it buoy him up with fresh energy to pursue the Path but he attains liberation (Mukti)...The man of the world who professes

Again, as Sri B. K.Majumdar observes, "The Tantra is the only Divine Revelation which throws open the gates of arcane nature to those who have the courage to peer into it. Man, in his onward Path, must dive deep into nature's heart to discover what he, and the universe of which he is a component part is. The method of spiritual self-culture leads him, step by step, to an acquaintance with nature's supersensuous beings, high and low, and teaches him how to utilize the services of the high, and to ward off the evil influences of the low. This knowledge is of essential importance to the sojourner on the Path; for the evil spirits throw every manner of obstacles to impede his march and encompass his ruin; whereas the good spirits would gladly help him on if he but knew how to obtain their help... The investigations of the Tantrik into the inner temple of nature reveal to him many secrets both of an objective and subjective nature, including those of the human mechanism. It is thus that he is a theurgist and thaumaturgist, alchemist, herbalist, metallurgist, physician, astrologer, and astronomer. The Tantrik's alchemy crossed the ocean and reached Europe; his chemistry discovered ages ago many truths, some of which have dawned upon European scientists within but recent times. He was the first in the world to use mercury, snake poison, and the metals as medicine. His system of medicine has superseded that of the Ayurveda. His science of

---

Tantrism has every faith in the reality of the world. To him it is not an illusion nor an evil, and therefore he exerts his utmost to make it the happy lap of the Mother, which it really is." (B. K. Majumdar, in his Introduction.)

Breath is still a mystery to the Europeans. Last, though not the least, there is what may be called his science of psychophysical culture, which renders the physical body obedient to the will, and thus by certain postures not only enables him to ward off and cure diseases, but to control the mind. The Tantra, in fine, is from its very nature an Encyclopaedic science."

In the Tantra, Monism and Dualism both take their due place as truths valid at different stages of the development of human consciousness. "The Tantra harmonises Vedantic Monism and Dualism. Its purpose is to give liberation to the jiva by a method through which monistic truth is reached through the dualistic world. It immerses its sadhakas in the current of divine bliss by changing duality into unity, and then evolving from the latter a dualistic play, thus proclaiming the wonderful glory of the Spouse of Paramashiva in the love-embrace of Matter (*jaḍa*) and Spirit (*caitanya*)...Shiva has therefore said: 'In the world some desire non-dualistic, others dualistic, knowledge, but those who have known My truth have passed beyond Dualism and Non-Dualism.' " (Sir John Woodroffe).

In the philosophy of the Tantras, especially the Shakta Tantra with which the present work is mostly concerned, the Ultimate Reality is the Transcendent described as Brahman. But this Brahman is not a Void to which we give a name. Brahman is a potent Ineffable. When Brahman is self-moved to manifest something of what is contained in Itself, there is a stir, a movement, *spanda*, which takes the form of a double poise: the Reality as Shiva and the same Reality as Shakti, the poise static and the poise dynamic. This movement proceeding on the twin bases of the Shakti and Shiva, the Supreme in its dynamic status and the Supreme in the static, develops into the play of the action, reaction, and interaction of the twin Principles (and powers based upon them) of Existence culminating in the emergence of the 36 *tattvas* and the subsequent evolution of the universe. Thus the universe is a manifestation by the Supreme as Shakti out of its own Being for the delight of Her play with the Supreme as the Lord. The same play, *līlā*, that results in the manifestation of the universe totally, is repeated in each individual form. Each thing, each man is an embodiment of the Shiva-Shakti and is a field for the delightful play of the Lord and the Spouse. Only man is not aware of it. He is separated from this real nature of himself by a veil of ignorance and hence he misses that delight of existence. To remove this veil and restore man to a direct awareness of his being an individual centre for the Lila of the Divine and give him his rightful share in the joy of it is the aim of the Tantra Sadhana. It is only when he is thus awakened to the presence of the Supreme Shakti within himself and everywhere in the world around that he can partake in Her Joy of manifestation in this variegated creation.

But it is not enough to have this knowledge as a concept in the mind. It is to be *realised* in oneself and made part of one's normal, active consciousness. In other words, man has to be reborn in the status of the divinity, an identity with the Shakti that pervades all and transcends all. The process of many steps that has been designed and perfected by the seers of the Tantra for this end is the Tantra Sadhana or the Tantra Marga.

GURU

The first requisite to take to this path is of course the Guru, Teacher. He is one who is already on that Path, who has realised in himself, fully or in part, the Truth that is sought and who is in a position to give a start to the seeker. This he does by imparting something of his own power[1] of tapasya, a part of what he has received and built up within himself, to the disciple—*śaktisañcāra*, transmission of his own *tejas*. The Guru,[2] says the Sastra,

---

[1] The Sastra speaks of two kinds of Shaktis of the Guru: Shakti of spiritual nature and the Shakti of knowledge, technique etc., known as the inner and the outer Shaktis.

[2] Some of the Tantras make distinctions among the Gurus. The *Picchila Tantra*, for instance, states: "Gurus are of two kinds according as they teach and initiate. The first is the initiating Guru (*Dīkṣāguru*) and then follows the teaching Guru (*śikṣāguru*). The initiating Guru is he from whom initiation in Mantra is taken, and the teaching Guru is he from whom Samadhi, Dhyana, Dharma, Japa, Stava, Kavacha, Purascharana, Mahapurascharana, and other various forms of sadhana and yoga are learnt after initiation. Of these two he is the supreme Guru, from whom the great Mantra of Ishtadevata has been heard and learnt, and by him alone Siddhi can be attained."

It will be interesting to follow the classification given by the *Kulāgama*:

"Instigator (*preraka*), or who instigates initiation by explaining its utility and that of sadhana; Inaugurator (*sūcaka*), or he who inaugurates should not be looked upon as a mere human teacher; he should be adored and waited upon as a representative of the Divine, indeed as the Divine itself in human form. For, as the *Yogini Tantra* says:

"He who is the first Lord and is called Mahakala is the Guru, O Devi! in all Mantras. None else is the Guru. He is verily the Guru of the Shaivas, Shaktas, Vaishnavas, Ganapatyas, Moon-worshippers, Mahashaivas and Sauras. He and none else is the promulgator of Mantra. *At the time of imparting Mantra*, O Daughter of mountain, *He manifests Himself in him who imparts Mantra.* Hence O Devi! verily there is no Guruship in man...Because He manifests Himself in the human Guru, therefore the greatness of the human Guru is published in all the Sastras."

Note also the importance given to the Guru in the *Viśvasāra Tantra*:

"The appearance (murti) of Guru is the root of Dhyana, the lotus-foot of Guru is the root of Puja, the word of Guru is the root of Mantra, and the grace of Guru is the root of Siddhi.'

MANTRA

This initiation, this communication of impulsion to the disciple, is usually done through a Mantra.

---

sadhana and its aims; Explainer (*vācaka*), or he who explains sadhana and its object; Director (*daiśaka*), or the person who definitely and clearly shows what sadhana is and its object; Teacher (*śikṣaka*), or he who teaches sadhana and its object; and Illuminator (*bodhaka*), or the person who imparts knowledge of, and concerning, sadhana and its object by tearing asunder the ties of the heart. Know Gurus to be of these six kinds, of which the first five kinds are, as it were, the effects of the last as the cause."

The Mantra is selected by the Guru after ascertaining the seeker's nativity, temperament, constitution —the elements in which he is strong and those in which he is deficient—and the goal aimed at. The Mantra has a power of its own, power of the Truth it embodies; to that is joined the personal spiritual power of the Guru. The seed of sadhana is planted in the being of the disciple through the vehicle of the chosen Mantra. We do not enter here into the philosophy of Sound, *nāda*, which is at the base of the Mantra Sastra that plays such a preponderant part in the Tantra. The author of this treatise deals at length with the subject and emphasises the importance of potency of the Word, the Mantra, not only in the manifestation of all Name and Form which have issued out of Sound, but also as providing the body for the Devata, the Godhead, to manifest and reach out to the aspiring sadhaka.

These Mantras, sacred syllables or words, are invocations to the Devatas, the Deities. The Mantra may be a regular prayer in words or a combination of syllables (*bīja-mantra*, seed-mantra). These latter are the sound-bodies of the respective Devatas; they are reproductions in human speech, as approximate as possible, of the original sound-vibrations that accompany the manifestation of the Devatas on their own plane of existence. These sounds when repeated in the prescribed manner act as evocations to those Deities.

DEVATAS

Now coming to the subject of Devatas, Godheads, it must be clearly understood that while each

Devata is a distinct power and personality in itself, all of them are emanations, several manifestations of the Supreme Shakti, the Divine Mother. In the course of this creation She has manifested Herself in diverse forms, but there are some personalities of Hers which have a central and lasting significance in the evolution of the universe. In the Tantra they are designated as the *Daśa Mahāvidyās*, Ten Great Forms in which She has incarnated and through which She is best adored and approached. They are: *Mahākālī*, *Tārā*, *Soḍaśī*, *Bhuvaneśvarī*, *Bhairavī*, *Bagalā*, *Chinnamastā*, *Mahātripurāsundarī*, *Dhūmavatī*, *Mātaṅgī*.[1]

The Tantra Sastra gives detailed descriptions of the forms of these Devatas (or *vidyās*) as they have been revealed to the seers in the course of their tapasya,and are visioned by those whose inner eye has opened. Each Devata has her Dhyana Mantra which gives a description of the form, limb by limb, in which She is to be contemplated and adored in dhyana, in mental worship. The Sastra recognises that this inner contemplation and worship is not praticable for all. For the majority of people a physical form, an external material symbol is needed. And this it provides in the form of Images, Idols or Symbols like the Yantra, Mandala, Linga, Salagrama etc.[1]

---

[1] "The dark-coloured form, with terrible eyes, which Thou dost see before Thee is Kali. She who is above Thee of Syama colour is Mahavidya Tara, the very image of Mahakala. The lean, destitute and very frightful Devi whom Thou dost see on Thy right side is, O high-souled Mahadeva, Mahavidya Chinnamasta. O Sambhu, the Devi on Thy left side is Bhuvaneshwari. She who is behind you is Devi Bagalamukhi, Destructress of foes. She who appears as a widow on the south-east is Devi Mahavidya Dhumavati, a great Iswari. The Devi on the south-west is Tripurasundari. In the north-west is Matangi, and in the north-east Mahavidya Sodasi, a great Iswari. She who is below thee is Bhairavi." (*Mahā Bhāgavata.*)

The *Tantra-Tattva* being written in the later half of the last Century when it was a fashion among the revivalist and reformist movements, like the Brahma-samaj and Arya-samaj, to condemn image worship as superstition and a relic of primitive mentality, the author has devoted a considerable portion of the book in meeting their arguments and establishing firmly the position of the institution of Idol or Image worship in an unassailable manner. Put briefly the truth of the matter is this: An idol, *mūrti*, by itself is indeed a material object like any other. But it is not as such that the *upāsaka* worships the Murti. Neither is it that out of devotion or in simple faith he imagines the Murti to be the Devata and offers worship to it. The Murti is worshipped only when it is enlivened and vibrates with the presence of the Devata and the Sastra prescribes the mode of so enlivening it. The sadhaka first evokes in his mind the image of the Deity as laid down in the Dhyana Mantra and dwells upon it, letting it suffuse itself in his own consciousness. Thereupon he breathes out of his illumined consciousness on the Idol repeating the prescribed Mantras and thus transmits the consciousness, *caitanya*, of the Inner Devata to the outer Murti. It is then that life is established, *prāṇapratiṣṭhā*, in the Murti and worship offered to the Godhead that dwells in it. After the worship is over, there is a reverse process of 'withdrawal' by which the Presence or the infused consciousness is drawn back from the Murti, the *saṁhāramudrā*. To quote a helpful passage from the *Gandharva Tantra*:

---

[1] "For the purpose of Brahman-worship it is necessary to worship a form which has been assumed by the Devata to show Himself to Sadhakas and to bestow favours on them. The image, again, must not be a production of the sadhaka's imagination only. Such images alone should be worshipped as are images of forms actually assumed by Her."

"Next, after performing Pranayama, the sadhaka should take handfuls of flowers. The Devi should never be invoked without handfuls of flowers. The sadhaka who has controlled his Prana will meditate on the Parameshwari as above described in his heart, and seeing by Her grace that image the substance of which is consciousness in his heart, let him think of the identity between that image manifested within and the image without. Next, the energy of consciousness (tejas) within should be taken without by means of the Vayu-bija (Mantra YANG) with the breath along the nostrils, and infused into the handful of flowers. Thus, issuing with the breath, the Devata enters into the flowers. The sadhaka should then establish the Devata in the image or Yantra (Diagram) by touching it with those flowers. So long as the work of establishing the Devi in the outer image of Yantra is not accomplished, the sadhaka should continue to hold those flowers of meditation in his hand...After drawing Her into the flowery Yantra by means of the Trikhanda Mudra, take the Mother of the world, who is all brilliant and forceful energy, out of that flowery Yantra by the force of the invoking Mantra and place Her within the Pitha (Image or Diagram)."

WORSHIP

Worship of the Devata is of two kinds, inner and outer. But the object of both is the same: a progressive realisation of one's identity with the Devata. The Deity can be truly worshipped only by oneself becoming the Deity, *devo bhūtvā devam yajet*. First the mental, inner worship and then the physical, outer worship.[1] The mode of worship varies in the different extant traditions as also in the same tradition according to the stage of the development of the worshipper, the circumstances, etc. The author discusses this at great length dilating upon each step and element[2] that enters in the ceremony of worship. He quotes from the seventh chapter of the *Gautamiya Tantra*:

"To go to the house of Devata, cleanse the place where the Devata is seated, and remove from the person of the image the pastes, flowers, garlands, and so forth attached to it. This is called *abhigamana*. *Upādāna* is the name given to the cutting of flowers and the like and the collecting of materials such as incense, sandal and so forth. *Ijyā* is the name for the worship of the Ishtadevata, with offerings of materials such as *pādya* (water for washing the feet) and so forth, accompanied by Mantrās, according to the Sastra, after Bhutashuddhi, Pranayama, mental worship and so forth. *Svādhyāya* is the Nyasa, name given to the doing of Japa, according to the Sastra of the Great Mantra, consisting of the name '*Kṛṣṇa*', reading its Sukta, Stotra, singing the name of Hari, and studying the spiritual Sastra, in their respective order. *Yoga* is the meditation of Ishtadevata in one's mind. O man of good deeds! these are the five forms of worship. They grant the fruits of *sāmīpya, sārūpya, sādṛśya* and *sāyujya* in succession: ***abhigamana and upādāna*** grant ***sāmipya***, *ijyā* grants ***sādṛśya***, ***svādhyāya*** grants ***sārūpya***, and ***yoga*** grants ***sāyujya***."

---

[1] "Outer worship should not be done without first performing mental worship, for without inner worship outer worship is fruitless." (*Sanātkumāra Tantra.*)

[2] *Bhūtaśuddhi, nyāsā, mudrā, upacāra, etc.*

And he adds: "The Gautamiya Tantra ordains worship of Vishnu. Consequently, it speaks of Japa of the Mantra, consisting of the name of Krishna, and singing of the name of Hari. But this is merely an indication of a Sadhak's duty relating to his Ishtadevata, be he a worshipper of Shakti or of Shiva, or of any other Devata."

Thus far regarding the ritual aspect of the Tantra sadhana. There is another and more significant facet of the practical knowledge bequeathed by the Tantra Sastra, and that is the Tantric Yoga, the psycho-physical discipline systematised and perfected by the adepts to awaken the hidden faculties in man and to develop them to their fullest potential in order to ensure a rapid liberation of his being and nature into the blissful embrace of the Shiva-Shakti embodied in him. The author only refers to this aspect of the Tantra Sadhana but does not dwell upon it partly because he considers it outside the scope of this writing and mostly because it is a knowledge to be learnt directly from the person of a competent Guru and could not be exposed with impunity to the profane eye. There is, however, mention of it in outline: "Inner Yajna is accomplished in this way. Mother Kulakundalini, the World-Consciousness living in the womb of the *Mulādhāra* lotus, is awakened. She is taken along the Sushumna path, piercing on the way throughout the six *cakras Mulādhāra, Svadhiṣṭhāna, Maṇipūra, Anāhata, Viśuddha*, and *Ajñā*. She and the Jivatma residing in the heart are united with the supreme Tattva of Paramashiva residing in the petals of the thousand-petalled lotus *Sahasrāra*. The *Māyik* elements of the phenomenal Mayik world are merged in the *Parambrahmatattva* of Shivashakti. The elemental products are the twenty-four Tattvas of earth, water, fire, air, ether, smell, taste, sight, touch, sound, nose, tongue, eye, ear, skin, voice, hand, foot, anus, genitals, Manas, Ahankara, Buddhi, and Prakriti. The Sadhaka thinks to himself that in their Mayik existence they exist as seed, and thus meditating offers a full *Ahuti* of the *Brahmāṇḍa* in Brahman Itself. Next, with the help of purified Mind-Prakriti, existing in the form of seed (bija), Mother Kulakundalini must, after re-awakening the dualistic Tattvas from their supreme union or undifferentiated non-dualistic Tattva of Shakti and possessor of Shakti or Prakriti and Purusha, be re-established in Her own place in the womb of the Muladhara lotus, and there united with *Svayambhūśiva*."

We would refer the reader to the *ṣatcakra-nirūpaṇa* of Swami Punyananda brought out by Sir John Woodroffe under the title *Serpent power*[1] with full translation, introduction and notes for an exhaustive treatment of the subject.

We have given barely an outline of the contents of this magnificent work which is truly encyclopaedic in its range. The value of the original work has been enhanced and fully rendered to the modern reader by the Introductions already referred to and the helpful notes by the Editor. If anyone wants to know the fundamentals of the Tantra Sastra according to genuine orthodox tradition we would unhesitatingly refer him to *Tantra Tattva.*

---

[1] **Also pubished by Ganesh & Co., Madras-17.**

Mahanirvana Tantra

There is a tradition that in the Krita Yuga life was sustained on the marrow, in the Treta on the bone, in the Dvapara on blood and in the present Kali Yuga life is dependent on food, *annagataprāṇāh.* The form, strength and longevity of men in the first Age was something gigantic and each successive age has registered a marked diminution. Corresponding to the need and capacity of the human beings different ways of life were enunciated in each Age in different Scriptures. Shruti, the Veda with its elaborate ritual and profound esoteric discipline, was prescribed in the Krita Age, the Smriti with its methodised and codified content in the Treta, the Puranas and kindred books in the Dvapara and, it is declared in the Tantras, the *Agamas* are the declared Scripture for our current age when

> "Dharma is destroyed, an age full of evil custom and deceit. Men pursue evil ways. The Vedas have lost their power; the Smritis are forgotten, and many of the Puranas, which contain stories of the past, and show the many ways to liberation...will be destroyed. Men will become averse from religious rites, without restraint.........Vipras will live like Shudras, and whilst neglecting their own *sandhya* will yet officiate at the sacrifices of the low. They will be greedy... ...averse to all *tapas* and *vrata*......The only sign that they are Brahmanas will be the thread they wear."[1]

The Tantras constituting the literature of the Agamas are many, but the essence of their Wisdom and Teaching, it is claimed, is given in the *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* :

---

[1] *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra*, I.

> O Deveshi, I will state before Thee the very essence distilled from the Vedas and Agamas, and in particular from the Tantras. As men versed in the Tantras are to other men, as the Jahnavi is to other rivers, as I (Shiva) am to all other Devas, so is this Mahanirvana Tantra to all other Agamas.[1]

The *Mahanirvāṇa Tantra*, as now available, consists of over 2,500 verses in fourteen chapters, purporting to be the replies given by Lord Shiva to the Devi, Parvati, on Mount Kailas, in answer to her urgent queries regarding the most appropriate Sastra for men in the Kali Age. These fourteen chapters, it is said, constitute only a third of the full text of the Tantra, the remaining portions not being available for publication. In the course of an introduction to his edition[2] of the text, Sir John Woodroffe refers to a complete manuscript about 500 years old lying with a Nepalese Pundit which he was permitted to copy out but prohibited from publishing the later portions of *Satkarma Mantras*. This unpublished part of the Mss., he informs, is double the published text. However, even the first part that is printed covers a wide field of the inner and outer life of the individual and his society. Written in simple language the verses have been commented upon by eminent Tantric scholars, the chief among them being Hariharananda.

---

[1] *Mahānirvāṇa*, II. 29, 30.

[2] The first edition of this Tantra to be published was in 1876 in Bengali script by the Adi Brahma Samaja. It was followed by other

The instruction begins on the high note of the Supreme Reality that is Brahman, the One without a second, who is also the Lord of All, ever-full and self-manifest, the Goal of all roads in life and after-life. He is, declares the Tantra, the 'Cause of all beings, the manifestation of whose creative energy in the three worlds is called Brahma. By His will Vishnu protects, and I (Shiva) dissolve. Indra and all other Guardian Devas of the world depend on Him and hold rule in their respective regions under His command... Through fear of Him the Wind blows, the Sun gives heat,[1] the Clouds shower seasonable rain and the Trees in the forest flower.'[2] He the Supreme is to be worshipped, contemplated upon for Liberation. For one who can so dwell upon Him with adoration of his entire being, what need is there of ritual, *nyāsa* or *mudrā* ?

The Brahman is to be meditated upon and invoked. And for that purpose the Mahanirvana gives the Mantra, the word of call: *Om Sac-Cid-Ekam-Brahma,*[3] Om the One Being Consciousness Brahman. For this Mantra, says the text, there is no need of the normal precautions and procedure of deciding whether the Mantra is friendly or inimical

---

editions in due course. The text consulted and used for our present study is the one edited, translated and annotated by Sir John Woodroffe and first published in 1913. It contains the commentary of Hariharananda. Currently it is running its fourth edition under the auspices of Ganesh & Co., Madras 17.

[1] MN. T. II. 40–44.

[2] *Vide* Katha Upanishad, VI. 3.

[3] ॐ सच्चिदेकं ब्रह्म ।

etc. nor is it necessary to go through the usual *samskāras* like *janana, tāḍana, boḍhana* etc. It is enough if it is received from a competent Guru.[1]

The meaning of the Mantra is next explained. For it is pointed out, 'for him who has no knowledge of the meaning of, nor of the awakening of the Mantra, it is fruitless, even though it were inwardly uttered ten mllion times.'[2]

> **A — Protector of the world**
> **U — He who dissolves it**
> **M — The Creator**
> **Sat — Eternal changeless Being**
> **Chit — Consciousness**
> **Ekam — One without a second**
> **Brahma — What is Vast (*bṛhatvāt*)** '[3]

Giving the genesis of the Mantra, the Tantra observes :

> The presiding Devata of the Mantra is the omnipresent, eternal, inscrutable, formless, stainless and ineffable Brahman.
>
> When introduced by the Bija of Saraswati (*aim*), or by the Bija of Maya (*hrim*) or Bija of Kamala (*śrīm*), instead of Om, it bestows various kinds of learning, or Siddhi in Maya or prosperity in all quarters. [4]

This is the *Mula Mantra* around which the worship of Brahman; Brahma Sadhana, is built up as described in the succeeding portions. With all its stress on the external ingredients of the ritual, the

---

[1] MN. T. III 16.

[2] *Ibid.*, III. 31.

[3] *Ibid.*, III. 32-34.

[4] *Ibid.*, III. 37-38.

Tantra declares in unambiguous terms:

> In the worship of the supreme Lord there is no need to invoke Him to be present or to desire Him to depart. It may be done always and in all places. It is of no account whether the worshipper has or has not bathed......But the Supreme Spirit should ever be worshipped with a pure heart.[1]

In the worship of the Supreme Brahman there is no other rule but the felt inclination, *icchāvidhi*, of the worshipper. He must be

> 'a listener ever to things divine, a meditator ever on the Brahman, his mind ever turned to the search for Brahman. With strength of determination holding his mind in close control, he is ever conscious of the nearness of Brahman.'[2]

Associated with the Brahma Mantra in this Sadhana is the Brahma Gayatri which reads:

Parameśwarāya vidmahe paratattvāya dhimahi
tanno brahma pracodayāt.

It may be rendered in English as:

> May that Brahman whom we know and meditate upon to attain the Supreme Lord, the Supreme Reality, may He activate us.[3]

The Brahman, however, can be approached not merely as the Lord, Parameshwara, but also as Parameshwari, the Supreme Shakti. For She is none else but Himself in another poise.

> 'Thou art the very Para Prakriti of Brahman, the Paramatma, and from Thee has sprung the whole Universe, O Shiva, its Mother.'[4]

[1] MN. T. III- 77-78.
[2] *Ibid.*, III. 101.
[3] *Ibid.*, III. 109-110.
[4] *Ibid.*, IV. 10.

She is the matrix of all that exists :

> 'Whatever there is in this world of things which have and are without motion, from Mahat to an atom, owes its origin and is dependent on Thee.'[1]

In common with many other texts in the Tantric tradition the *Mahānirvāṇa* declares :

> 'Though in Thyself formless, yet Thou hast form. For the helping of the worshipper, the good of the world, and the destruction of the Danavas, Thou dost assume various forms.'[2]

And it goes on to prescribe the best mode of worship, a swift course of sadhana for man to effect his liberation from Ignorance and achieve union with the Supreme Consciousness that is She.

It is known that the Tantras have generally three kinds of sadhanas, *ācāras*, for the three categories of sadhakas into which men are classified by them according to their temperament viz. Pashu Bhava, Vira Bhava and Divya Bhava. Now, the text declares that in

> 'this Kali Age there is no Pashu Bhava : Divya Bhava is difficult of attainment. But the practices relating to Vira sadhana yield visible fruit.'[3]

It is not practicable in this age to go through all the elaborate outer ritual demanded of the Pashu achara, like collecting all the ingredients with one's hands etc. Nor is it reasonable to expect men in this age of degeneration of physical, mental and spiritual faculties, to act in the way of the gods.[1] Hence the Virachara, the Kaula Marga, worship of the Divine Mother is enjoined upon all born in the Kali Yuga.

---

[1] MN. T. IV. 11.

[2] *Ibid.*, IV. 15-16.

[3] *Ibid.*, IV. 19.

In this Path of the Kaula (worshipper of the Shakti), man is not called upon to renounce his rightful share in the joy and glory of life. By participating in it he does not forfeit his claim for liberation from the *māyic* quagmire of falsehood, evil and death. The Kaula doctrine and its practice give the key to the reconciliation of both the joy of life and the Ananda of release into the freedom of the Spirit. The sadhaka cultivates, develops and progressively realises in himself the vision of the Divine Mother, the Supreme Shakti, as embodied in all things that are manifest for the varied delight of Her Lila. She manifests Herself multitudinously and sports in the richness of Her creation from a million centres of enjoyment. By a progressive identification of his own consciousness with this larger Consciousness of the World-Mother, the sadhaka participates in the Lila, has the joy of things and in that very process of self-identification and merger grows into the nature of the Divine Mother. All the elements that make for the sustenance, growth and luxuriance of life are drawn upon in their acme and used toward this fulfilment. This in brief is the rationale underlying the Shakti worship.

---

[1] 'The Pashu must with his own hand collect leaves, flowers, fruits and water, and should not look at a Shudra or even think of a woman. On the other hand, the Divya is all but a Deva, ever pure of heart, and to whom all opposites are alike, free from attachment to worldly things, the same to all creatures and forgiving. How can men with the taint of this Age upon them, who are ever of restless mind, prone to sleep and sloth, attain to purity of disposition?' (MN. T. I. 55-57).

The Mula Mantra for worship of the Shakti is the ten-lettered Vidya:

Hrim ṣrim krim pa-ra-me-śva-ri svā-hā.[1] The text goes on to mention certain other Mantras that arise by modification, such as the seven-lettered *parameśwari svāhā*, the sixteen-lettered *ṣoḍaśi* etc.[2]

The Shakti Mantra is expected to be used in the practice of the Shakti Sadhana with Kulachara rites in which enter the famous five elements, the *panca makāras*. But these are not to be used without an elaborate and exhausting ritual of purification, equipment of oneself psychologically and physically. It is only when one rises in his consciousness above the animal level and functions as a representative of the Shakti that one can truly enter into the spirit of the sadhana and perform fruitfully. It is an important part of the ritual to 'burn up the sinful inclinations of the body', to burn the *pāpa puruṣa* before stepping into the central ritual with a 'new born Deva body', *deham navīnam devatāmayam.*[1]

---

[1] MN. T. V. 10-13.

[2] Eight-lettered, *aṣṭākṣari mantras*: *klim parameśvari svāhā; aim parameśvari svāhā*: *om parameśvari svāhā.*

Sixteen-lettered: *Hrim śrim krim parameśvari Kalike Hrim Śrim Krim Svāhā.*

The above when prefixed by the *bija* of *vadhu* (strim) or by *Praṇava* (Om) becomes the seventeen-lettered.

(MN. T. V. 15-18).

Details of the worship of the Devi with form and without form, worship internal and worship external, are given in utmost detail. We would only quote a few of the typical utterances which emphasize the importance given by the ancients to internal readiness, the psychological purity[2] of the aspirant in the sadhana :

> In the making of the kalasha all *miserliness* should be avoided, since it is fashioned for the pleasure of the Devas. (V. 183)
>
> Considering the Wine to be the Devata flowers should be offered with Japa of the Mula Mantra...wine should be always thus purified. (V. 205–206)

While offering the cup to the Supreme Shakti the sadhaka should feel and repeat: 'I offer as oblation into the Fire of the Supreme Self the excellent nectar of Thisness (idanta) with which the cup of I–ness is filled.' (VI. 42)

It is necessary to note that for those who are of a weaker fibre of mind and spirit the Tantra enjoins in unequivocal terms :

> 'In the case of the house-holder whose mind is entirely engrossed with domestic desires, the three sweets should be substituted in the place of the first element of worship (wine). Milk, sugar and honey are the three sweets. They should be deemed to be the image of wine, and as such offered to the Deity.

---

[1] MN. T. V. 103.

[2] Speaking of purification it is emphasised that whatever purifies the *mind* that is to be done, *manah pūtam bhaved yena......tad ācaret* (VIII. 74).

> Those born in Kali Age are by their nature weak in intellect, and their minds are distracted by lust. By reason of this, they do not recognise the Shakti to be the image of the Deity. Therefore, O Parvati, for such as these let there be, in place of the last element of worship (sexual union), meditation upon the Lotus-feet of the Devi and the inward recitation of their *Iṣṭa Mantra.* (VIII.171–174)

Important instructions on the subject of Guru, Japa, Mantra,[1] Pranapratishtha, Puja, Samhara Mudra, Significance of the Panchatattvas[2] are laid down in minute detail.

The *Māhanirvāṇa Tantra* then proceeds to expound the *ācāra* or Dharma to be followed by the individual in different stages and different walks of life. From the moment of his birth to that of his death every event of his life is invested with a significance and treated from the religious and spiritual standpoint. The entire life of the community, social, economic, religious and even political,—castes and ashramas, women, laws of inheritance, adoption, kingship and commerce, ascetics and Avadhutas, disabled members of society, Temples and Yagas, etc., etc. — all these aspects come to be touched upon from the angle of the ethical and spiritual development of the individual in harmony with the progress of the community of which he is a member and the instruction is generally in line with the famous Smritis of Manu and other authorities.[1]

---

[1] An important verse may be quoted here: The worshipper should then meditate upon his Guru as being in his head, the Devi in his heart, the Mula Mantra in the form of Tejas on his tongue, and *himself as identified with the glory of all three.* (VI. 168).

[2] *Vide*: Know that the first element is fire, the second is air, the third is water, the fourth is the earth and...as to the fifth element, know it to be ether, the support of the Universe. (VII. 110).

As we approach the end of the last chapter the tone of the teaching changes. There is a notable shift of emphasis from ceremonial worship and religious rites to an inner Self-Knowledge, to the necessity of an inner discipline to gain the freedom of the soul. In memorable lines the Tantra declares:

> Liberation does not come from Japa, Homa or a hundred fasts: man becomes liberated by the knowledge that he himself is Brahman.
>
> Final liberation is attained by the knowledge that the Atma is the Witness, is the Truth, is omnipresent, is one, free from eluding distractions of self and no-self, the supreme, and though abiding in the body, is not in the body.
>
> Brahma-sad-bhava is the highest; Dhyanabhava is middling; Stuti and Japa is the last; and external worship is the lowest of all.
>
> Yoga is the unity of the embodied spirit and the Supreme Spirit; Puja is the union of the worshipper and the worshipped;

---

[1] Generally, not in every detail. For instance the *Mahānirvāṇa* speaks of a fifth caste (beyond the usual four)—the *Sāmānya* born of the mixture of others. It also says that there are only two *āśramas* in the Kali Age, that of Grihastha and Bhikshuka, householder and mendicant; 'there is in the Kali Age no Brahmacharya nor Vanaprastha.' (VIII. 8).

Also interesting for the student of the social conditions of the older society are the following imperatives:

'The human body is the receptacle of piety, wealth, desires and final liberation. It should therefore never be the subject of purchase; and such a purchase is by reason of My commands invalid.' (VIII. 140)

'A wife should not be burnt with her dead husband. Every woman is Thy image—Thou residest concealed in the forms of all women in this world.' (X. 79-80).

but he who realises that all things are Brahman for him there is neither Yoga nor Puja.

For him who possesses the knowledge of Brahman, the supreme Knowledge, of what use are Japa, Yajna, Tapas, Niyama, and Vrata?

He who sees the Brahman, who is Truth, Knowledge, Bliss, and the One, is by his very nature one with the Brahman. Of what use to him are Puja ..

For him who knows that all is Brahman there is none to meditate upon, nor one who meditates.

He abides in this Universe, the creation of His Power of Maya, which is incomprehensible even to the Devas. He is seemingly in the Universe, but not in it......

Self-knowledge, O Devi, is the one means of attaining final Liberation; and he who possesses it, is verily—yea, verily-liberated in this world, even whilst living. (XIV. 115-135)

Sri Lalita Sahasra Nama

The *Lalitāsahasranāmam* is a gem in the spiritual literature of ancient India. Like the myriad aspects of the Divine Radiance whose glory it celebrates, this work too has several aspects, personalities that reveal themselves as one studies it deeper and deeper. It is a devotional poem capable of lifting the devotee to the utmost heights of fervour; it is an epitome of the vast knowledge that is embodied in the innumerable Agamas; it is again a Sadhana–sastra, a manual of inner discipline, delineating the route or routes to be traversed by the seeker to the Ultimate; it is also a work of unsurpassed literary merit. No doubt one is apt to miss much if one reads it as just a *nāmāvali* in ritual. The great Commentary of Bhaskara Raya Makhi is there fortunately to help enter deep into the portals of this magnificent Scripture and baptise oneself into the sacred waters of the Thousand Names each of which is a saving Mantra. So read and so studied, the work ceases to be a book; it reveals its character as a mighty Power capable of taking you to the pinnacles of the Spirit. It is enough to approach it initially with a certain reverence due to an Elder. Gradually as you read it, a gentle devotion arises in your heart. Continue, and the devotion melts into the beginnings of love for the Divine Mother who is lauded in this rich litany. Along with love there comes a wonder at the immensity of it all, at the infinitude of the Infinite into which you feel admitted through these thousand gates. Even when you have done with the reading or chanting, it pursues you. The aroma of Something heavenly elevating surrounds for a long time afterwards and you will find one day that the Mantras reverberate in your being even in sleep and and you wake up to the accompaniment of the notes of this celestial chant. The character of the Scripture changes to your awareness day by day until it is revealed to you that the Work is none other than the Great Mother Herself.

True, not all can follow this commentary, *saubhagyabhāskara*, at the first reading. Some kind of background, a mental preparation is needed and it is precisely this help that is provided in a recent publication on the subject[1].

When our ancient Seers declared that what we see of the world before us is not its real character but that all its Names and Forms are created by and derive from an ultimate Reality that is of the nature of a Consciousness which is not only self-aware but also self-active, a Shakti, they did not arrive at that conclusion by mental reasoning. They perceived the truth with their inner eye of knowledge. Centuries later, points out the author of this book, Dr. Suryanarayanamurthy, leaders of modern Physical Science in the West who swore by Matter till the other day, scientists who have probed into the secrecies of the minutest particle of

---

[1] **Sri Lalita Sahasra Namam By Dr. C. Suryanarayanamurthy. Pub. Ganesh & Co. Madras.**

Matter and studied with the aid of instruments huge stellar systems, are all veering round to a kind of scientific Monism and assert that the final truth of the world in which we live is not Matter but Something which can be conceived as a vibrating Consciousness of which both our Mind and Matter are graded formulations. Thus the circle is complete. What was posited by the Rishis of old as the ultimate Reality on the basis of intuitive insight has been now corroborated from the other end of positive Reason. Pure Consciousness, Supreme Shakti is at the head of this creation and as such She has been worshipped all along in India. The author gives a rapid sketch of the development of Shakti worship among the Aryans, in India and elsewhere. After mentioning the evidence of Mother Divine in the Vedas and to a certain extent in the Upanishad, he traces its course and influence in the Tantras with all their diversification of schools and rituals.

In developing the Shakti Upasana to a fine science, the Tantra has fashioned more ways than one, to suit the different temperaments and varying states of readiness of the aspirants. The aim of all these paths is indeed the same viz. a gradual dispossession of the animal nature, cultivation of higher human values and an eventual at-onement with the One Divine Consciousness that pervades All, that stations Itself in the individual, spreads itself in the universe and contains both in its transcendent Being. The author refers to the different paths in passing and dwells in a little detail on what are called (or miscalled) the 'left-hand' and 'right-hand' paths, *vāma-mārga* and *dakṣiṇa-mārga*. Leaving the question of the former, the Kaulamarga, as it is not relevant to our purpose here, let us follow the author in his exposition of the Dakshinachara or the Samaya-mata in which the *Lalitāsahasranāma* plays an important part.

> "This Samayachara is the ritual adopted in the monastic institutions established by Sri Shankara and prescribed to Hindus since his time. This Samayachara like all other disciplines of Hinduism is a system of integrating within itself the Yogas of Mantra, Laya, Bhakti, Jnana...(It) is the worship of Sri Shakti according to the five sacred texts known as Shubhagama Panchaka viz. Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatkumara, Vasishtha, and Shuka Samhitas. Here, Sri Dakshinamurti is the Rishi, Kameshwari and Kameshwara are the Deities of worship. The disciple must be able to imagine the identity of Shiva and Shakti with the various components of Sri Chakra. He must also identify them with the seven planes of consciousness or Chakras in the body known as Muladhara and others. His worship of Shakti must be mostly mental or *antaryāga* as prescribed by Bhavopanishad. He should merge his mind and its actions in Shakti established in the highest plane of consciousness known as Sahasrara in the centre of the head."

He follows it up with an account of the philosophical assumptions of this system, especially the Oneness in duality of Shiva and Shakti, the theory of Creation from Nāda, the sense in which the Word is womb of the World, the significance of Mantra and Yantra in tantric worship etc. It is important to note that in this teaching the world and its constituent members is a manifestation, a real projection of the Divine Consciousness-Force for a varied play of Self-Delight and each form, each name, properly sensed is a vehicle of the manifesting Consciousness, the Shakti. By virtue of their constitution, some forms are more vibrant and some less. Some yield their vibratory contents more readily than others and it is these that are selected for approach and contact with the Divine in all spiritual paths. The Mantra, the potent word, is one such capital means to enter into the Higher Consciousness. Each 'Mantra is a letter picture of the concept of the Devata seen intuitively by Seers ...A mantra which is a sacred combination of letters representing God, if repeated in meditation will make the disciple realise the Godhead of that Mantra.' If the Mantra is the sound-body of the Deity, the Yantra is the linear symbol of the same Deity. And of all the Yantras for which Tantra sastra is famous, the Sri Chakra is celebrated as the eternal abode of Sri Lalita the supreme Deity in the Samaya Mata.

> "A close scrutiny of Sri Chakra will show how the power of the Lord Parameshwara represented by a point in a small triangle at the centre of the Sri Chakra transforms itself through a series of triangles, circles and lines and becomes the diagram Sri Chakra which represents the completly evolved universe of individual. One should meditate on Sri Chakra knowing the significance of the triangle, trikona, and circles. These represent the various transformations of reality, as power which finally culminates in the universe of mind and matter of our experience. They are also called *āvaranas* or limitations which the power of reality imposes upon Herself to create the universe. The disciple should realise how both the universe and himself have evolved out of undifferentiated consciousness through its own power and become this Universe of name and form."

The *Lalitāsahasranāma* combines in its body all these concepts of the highest philosophical and intuitive Thought, the innumerable ways of approach of the human soul to its Maker and the countless forms of life, mind and matter which serve as special concentrations of the Divine Power for the aspirant to draw upon. It is a profound experience to awake, as a result of a dedicated study of the Poem, to the presence of the Beloved Mother in every sight seen by the eye, in every word heard by the ear and to discover, at one sudden moment, that you are no more yourself but SHE, the Divine Mother, the Empress of all sovereignties, Rajarajeshwari.

The Guru-Shishya Tradition

The importance attached to the institution of the Guru and Shishya, Guide and Initiate, in the spiritual tradition of India — as indeed in most of the esoteric disciplines all over the world—may well provoke the sophisticated modern philosopher to ask where is the necessity of accepting another as Guru? Is not man endowed with sufficient intelligence to see what is good for him and what is not? Can he not choose his course of life, in whatever field, on his own? Surely man has a mind and a will to determine and shape his own destiny. More than that. If it be true, as is declared in the scriptures and testified by so many in all ages, that in the heart of each one there is the Divine, the *antaryāmin*, who is the innate Guide of each man, then where is the need of a human Guru? One has only to listen to the voice of this Leader within oneself instead of subjecting himself to the will and control of another man who is after all as fallible as any human being cannot but be. There are not a few instances of yogins, saints and mystics who have had no Guru save this Inner Guide and by following Him they have arrived at their destination. The indispensability of the Guru-Shishya system is nothing more than a superstition that is better discarded in this rational age of development.

It is certainly true that in each man there is the Divine stationed in the innermost recesses of the heart, He who is not only the Lord of his own existence but who is indeed spread everywhere and rules the universe, the Jagad-Guru, World-Teacher. But the question is how many can feel and realise that Presence? How many can open to and receive guidance from Him? Man, as he is, is severely limited in his vision and audition by the several folds of Ignorance in which he is steeped and he cannot normally reach very far, either upwards or inwards. Besides, the Falsehood which is a product of Ignorance is so much intermingled with the functionings of his senses that it is easy for him to mistake the voices of his own ego or desire-self to be the dictates of the Soul. Theoretically indeed it is possible to awake to the inner Guide and go ahead in one's spiritual journey as has been demonstrated by rare men now and then in the history of man. But by and large, this truth is limited in its application by reason of the immaturity of the human mind in its present state of development.

Further, it is by the senses that man knows and believes, and the senses are turned outward, *bahirmukha*. They do not report on what they do not see or sense in a physical way and hence it is difficult for man to believe in a Guide who cannot be physically felt or seen. An unseen Guide cannot normally claim his faith. To meet this natural difficulty the Indian tradition recognises the fact of the *Avatarā*, the Divine descending into the world of man in a perceptible, physical form, the Incarnation, the Divine Man who claims the allegiance of progressive mankind. Incarnations are however rare, they come once in a way, only at crucial stages in the evolution of the universe. But there are lesser manifestations of the Divine, emanations that come for specific work, the *Vibhutis*, the Prophets, Men of God. These are the God-appointed Gurus of humanity to lead men Godward. But they too are not born every day and they are not many who can draw upon their Word of teaching as a sufficient guidance for sucessful practice. A past personality, a past teaching is still a power, no doubt, but it has its limitations in application in a present far removed from the age in which the message was delivered, in a future still further remote.

It is to meet such an unfilled need for adequate guidance and lead in the inner life that ancient Indian tradition holds up the Ideal of the human Guru. This Guru is a human being, living, who has already trodden the path chosen by the seeker and who is in a position to show him the way. Not only show the way, but he has also the power to transmit the truth of his experience or realisation to the disciple. In fact it is he who makes the spiritual Ideal living and dynamic for the novice by initiating him into the knowledge of its Truth with a simultaneous impulsion into the practice for its progressive embodiment in his life. Without such a Guru it is well nigh impossible to go far on the Path. The spiritual domain is still an unfrequented territory to the normal human mind and if one is not to lose one's way in the vasts and deeps that abound in its infinite spread-out, one has to have recourse to a Guide who has known the terrain and who is competent to lead. Says the Seer in the Rig Veda: The stranger asks the way of him who knows it; taught by him who knows, he travels onward. This is indeed the blessing of Instruction; he finds the path that leads *directly* forward. (X. 32.7) The Upanishads declare in one voice that only he who has a Teacher can know, *ācāryavān puruṣo veda*[1].

Brahman is the object of the supreme quest and Brahman cannot be known by one's own mental effort. "Unless told of Him by another thou can'st not find thy way to Him; for He is subtler than subtlety and that which logic cannot reach. This wisdom is not to be had by reasoning, only when told thee by another it brings real knowledge."[2] Even study of Sruti, scripture, works of authority, cannot give the delivering Knowledge. Only by knowledge received direct from the Guru does one attain to the most beneficent.[3] It is only one in whom that knowledge is alive that can communicate to the seeker. The Upanishads record how even those who were teachers in their own right and were masters in their own fields of knowledge had to go as disciples to other adepts when they sought to know the truth of other Paths. Not that these seers could not grasp it intellectually by themselves. But there was something more that had to be imbibed, the *technique* to make that knowledge effective in themselves. "We can give you the knowledge, even knowledge of the Atman", say the Gods "but only the Teacher can show you *the way*."[1]

---

[1] *Chnādogya Up.* 6.14.21

[2] *Katha Up.* 1.2.8.9

[3] *Ch. Up.* 4.4.3.

If the Veda and the Upanishad testify to the advisability, even indispensability of the Guru and found a tradition of the Guru-Shishya axis[2], it is the Tantra that has given a firm shape to the tradition and worked out in minute detail the dynamics of the Guru-Shishya operation.

In the tradition of the Tantra the Guru is the central pivot on which every movement in spiritual life turns. He is not just a learned man who can teach. It is profane to look upon him as human. He is much more, in fact, he is looked upon as a representative of the Divine, even the very Divine Himself. The supreme Shiva who is formless, says the *Kulārṇava*, appears to the seeker in the Form of the Guru. The Guru is great because the First Lord, *Mahākāla* is manifest in him.[3]

The Tantras declare unambiguously that no man can walk the path unaided. One may have read books, practised austerities, acquired amazing proficiency in the use of his faculties. But book-learning remains a mental knowledge, ritual becomes a mechanical routine, unless they are energised by the personality of the Guru. It is only those acts that are inspired by the Guru that yield Bhakti, and Mukti, *gurumukhyāḥ kriyāh sarvā bhaktimukti-phalapradāḥ*. One may be qualified. But he still needs someone to launch him on the journey, to implant that power in him which would keep him moving and lead him aright through the regions that are beyond the limits of human capacity to negotiate. And this help is provided by the Guru. Whatever the nature of the Sadhana, whether it is the way of meditation, *dhyāna*, or ritualistic worship, *pūjā*, or *mantra-japa*, it is the Guru who initiates, conducts and leads to fruition. "The form of the Guru is the root of *dhyāna*, the lotus-feet of the Guru is the root of *pūjā*, the word of the Guru is the root of *mantra*, and the grace of the Guru is the root of *Siddhi*."[1]

---

[1] *Ch. Up.* 4.14.1

[2] of which the Master is the first form, the disciple the latter form, their junction resulting in the Vidya (Taittir. Up. I. 3.2.)

[3] *Yogini Tantra*

The Guru is of two types: *śikṣā guru*, one who expounds and teaches the Sastra to the enquiring intelligence and equips the mind with an ordered knowledge bearing on the meaning and goal of existence; *dīkṣā guru*, he who initiates the seeker into the dynamics of the Path that is to be followed to translate that knowledge in his own life. A more detailed classification is given in the *Kulārṇava Tantra*, where the Gurus are described as being of six different kinds: *preraka* who creates an interest in Sadhana the practical discipline, by drawing attention to its beneficent results; *sūhaka,* who opens the eye of the seeker to the vision of the sadhana and its objective; *vācaka* who explains the method and the goal; ***darśaka***, who shows them in convincing detail; ***sikṣaka*** who teaches, step by step, the discipline and details of the ritual; and ***bodhaka*** who endows the aspirant with the necessary understanding of mind and illuminates his being with his own spiritual light. Of these six kinds, says the Tantra, the last, Bodhaka, is as it were, the prime cause of which the rest are the effects: without the lamp of knowledge lighted by the Bodhaka all other steps remain without consequence.

---

[1] Kularnava C X. 13.

What are the qualifications that are demanded of a Guru? The Tantra Sastra is very exacting on this point. He must be "endowed with all auspicious features; graced with full limbs, knower of all *āgamic* lore, knower of the course of all Mantras, endearing to all, charming like a god, of happy countenance, easy of access, remover of delusion and doubt; who can read by signs and gestures, knows the pros and cons, wise, brilliant, with attention fixed within though the gaze is outward (*antar–lakṣyo bahir–dṛṣṭiḥ*), who knows the right time and right place; whose command is self–fulfilling; knows the past, present and the future; capable of control as of release; knows to impinge subtly, to illumine; serene, benevolent to all creatures, controlled in the movement of the senses and victorious over the six enemies; premier, solemn, with discrimination between the deserving and the non–deserving ...pure, ever contented, potent with Mantra-shakti, lover of devotees, bold, kind–hearted, of smile before speech...content with what comes unasked...identified with the one I in all, free from duality."

In a more significant passage it declares: "He is the Guru whose vision is steady without object, mind steady without support, breath immobile without effort." "*When he shows the Truth one becomes that Truth.*" (*Kulārṇava* XIII)

The Guru, the Acharya, is one who practises himself what he preaches and establishes the disciple in that practice, *svayam ācarate, śiṣyam ācare sthāpayatyapi* (*Rudra Yāmala*). He is ever ready and eager to help and uplift those who come to him for aid. He is capable of assuming the burden of those who come under his care and ferries them across the ocean of existence like a hospitable boat. For the Guru is ultimately the doer who works the sadhana, *kartā*, saviour who protects from all dangers, *pātā*, annihilator who destroys all obstructions, *hartā*; he is the donor of Liberation, *mokṣapradāyakaḥ*.

Such an inordinate importance given to the Guru and power attributed to him would be indeed un–understandable if we fail to note that to the seers of the Tantra the Guru is not just the human personality that bears the name. In truth the real Guru is not visible to the physical eye at all. He is there seated in the upper reaches of the head, in the thousand-petalled Lotus, the *sahasrāra*, the Eternal Guru, the Lord who rules the whole domain. "There is only one auspicious Guru and he is certainly Myself...He is to be contemplated at times in the thousand–petalled Lotus, at times in the heart–lotus and at other times as present before the eye (in human form) (*Yāmalā*). It is this Guru that is concentrated upon and invoked by the human guru first in himself and then communicated in His power to the disciple. Asks the *Kulārṇava:* If Shiva himself is not the guru, then who is it that gives the bliss and the liberation? Another Tantra describes the Guru as the grandsire of the Deity invoked: Mantra is born of the Guru, Devata is born of the Mantra; and so the Guru is the grandfather of the Devata.

Thus it is the Divine who is present and active in the person of the human Guru that is transmitted and implanted in the being of the disciple. It is the Divine that initiates[1] the career of the sadhana and conducts it. The Guru is only the channel, the representative of the Divine. The disciple is enjoined to keep this fact in mind and to have utter devotion to him as to the Divine, *yathā deve tathā gurau*[2], a firm faith in the Guru as a front of the Divine. It is this fact of the Divine behind the Guru and the faith of the disciple in the Guru as the Divine that are of cardinal importance. The human personality of the Guru does not count so much as this faith of the Shishya in the Guru. For that faith connects him with the Divine through the Guru and whatever be the failings or limitations of the Guru, the devotion and faith of the disciple do not go barren. While on the subject we are reminded of Sri Aurobindo's authentic remarks in this regard :

---

[1] *Mantrapradāna-kale li mānuśe girihandini adhiṣṭhānam bhavet tasya mahākālasya śankari (Yogini Tantra)*

[2] Spiritual knowledge comes to luminous fruition only when given. to the high-should one who has supreme devotion in the Divine and in the Guru as in the Divine. (*śvetāśvatara* up. 6.5.5)

"It is not the human defects of the Guru that can stand in the way when there is the psychic opening, confidence, and surrender. The Guru is the channel or the representative or the manifestation of the Divine, according to the measure of his personality or his attainment; but whatever he is, it is to the Divine, that one opens in opening to him ; and if something is determined by the power of the channel, more is determined by the inherent and intrinsic attitude of the receiving consciousness, an element that comes out in the surface mind as simple trust or direct unconditional self-giving, and once that is there, the essential things can be gained even from one who seems to others than the disciple an inferior spiritual source, and the rest will grow up in the sadhak of itself by the Grace of the Divine, even if the human being in the Guru cannot give it."

Thus to the disciple the Guru embodies the Divine, he holds in himself the full knowledge and the central Truth of the Path that is sought after by the seeker and is in a position to communicate to him something of his own power of consciousness perfected in the sadhana of the Path. This is the Sadhana-shakti that is alive with the tapas of the Guru and once it is entered into the being of the disciple it commences his sadhana, takes charge and leads him onward. Before going into the process of this transmission of Shakti, initiation as it is called, let us see what the Tantras have to say about the qualifications of the disciple.

The disciple should be "born in a noble family; of pure spirit; seeking the fourfold object of life; learned in the Vedas; wise, devoted to the service of the parents; knower of dharma and doer thereof; attached to the personal service of the guru; proficient in sastra; strong of body and mind; ever desirous of doing good to others; a doer of acts which bear good fruit in the next world; devoted to the service of guru in speech, mind, body, and with his wealth; mindful only of acts which bear enduring fruit; with control over the senses; free from sloth; free from delusion and vanity;" *(Gautamiya Tantra)*.

"Of good family, pure of soul, set on reaching the supreme object of life, well versed in Vedic knowledge, skilful, free from desire, well-wisher of all, believer, devoted to the parents and engaged in service to the guru in speech, mind and body..." *(Śāradā Tilaka)*

Among the requirements laid down in the *Kulārṇava* are: faith, devotion, deep thought, discrimination, gratitude, zeal, freedom from poverty of mind, *mano-dāridya-varjitam*.

In other words, one must have an earnest seeking. He should have a keen awareness of the futility of leading the ordinary animal life and somewhere in him must burn the flame of aspiration to a life in Truth, in God, a constant urge for liberation from the human bonds into the freedom of the Infinite. He must have a strong will to persist in the face of obstacles, a central sincerity to the Ideal that is chosen, to the Guru who is resorted to and to the Sadhana-Shakti that is invoked and set active in himself. Once this sincerity is there in a sufficient measure, the rest is assured, whatever the shortcomings of the aspirant. The burden is upon the Guru, upon the Divine who is opened to through the Guru.

So equipped the seeker approaches the Teacher, the Guru, "fuel in hand" *samitpāṇi*, ready to catch the fire of Knowledge.

Thus approached in humility of mind and ardour of the soul, the Guru receives the aspirant and puts him through a period of observation during which he satisfies himself regarding the competence, the *adhikāra* of the novice for the higher calling. He sees not merely the outer personality but studies also the inner nature, the type of the soul and the kind of development already undergone and the direction in which further growth is to be promoted, and also whether there is the needed affinity of being between himself and the fresher. Once that is done, he decides on the nature of the discipline that is best suited to the aspirant and proceeds to instruct accordingly. Instruction, *upadeśa*, may enjoin the way of *karma*, works, ritual; or the way of *dharma*, faithful observance of the injunctions of the Sastra, secular and religious; or the way of *jnāna,* illumination of the mind by the light of higher Knowledge, Knowledge of the real nature of oneself, the world and the Divine. In a picturesque imagery—which, however, need not be taken too literally,—the first, *karma-mārga,* is compared to the course of the ant at the bottom of the tree starting out to reach the fruit at the top; the *dharmamārgā* to the progress of the monkey hopping from branch to branch on its way to the summit; the *jnāna-mārga* is likened to the rapid movement of the bird which flies straight to its destination without any meandering or delay.

Whatever the path chosen and discipline selected for the seeker, no real sadhana begins till a relation is established between him and the Guru. And this relation starts from the moment an inner connection is made between the two as a result of something from the consciousness of the Guru entering into the being of the disciple. This entry of the Guru into the disciple is aptly described as the impact or descent of the Higher Power, the Conscious-Power of the Guru or of the very Divine through him, *śakti-pāta.* Where this *śakti-pāta* is not, says the Sastra, there is no fufilment.

The means of effecting this transmission of consciousness is called Initiation, *dīkṣā.* Diksha is what gives union with the Divine and sunders the the knots that bind.[1]

---

[1] *diyate śivasāyvjyam kṣiyate pāśabandanam (Paramānanda Tantra)*
Pāśa, bonds are of three Kinds: *sahaja,* natural, those with which one is born; *āgantuka,* those that come about by accident; *samsargika.* forged by associations (*Prayoga-sāra*)

Diksha is either *bāhyā*, external, effected through some outer means of interchange, *kriyā dikṣā*; or it is *ābhyantari*, inner or subtly effected, the *vedha dīkṣā*. It is called *vedha* because like the hunter reaching his prey by sheer sound-direction, without even seeing his object, the Guru's shakti strikes at the being of the disciple wherever he be, irrespective of any barrier or distance.

Initiation without any ritual or outer process is threefold: *spārśi*, based upon touch, which tends the disciple in the manner of a bird nourishing its young ones within the warm folds of its wings; *cākṣuśi*, based upon sight, acts like the fish which bring up their offspring by means of sight alone; *mānasi*, mental which builds like the tortoise feeding its infant by only thinking of it.

According to another classification, Diksha is of three kinds :

Śāmbhavi, *Śākti* and *Āṇavi*. *Śākti* is that in which there is no ritual or physical contact for purposes of initiation. It takes place when the Guru by his yogic power enters his own shakti into the being of the disciple, *directly*. The disciple may not be even physically present before the Guru. The Guru thinks of him and sends an emanation of his consciousness to enter and take charge of the disciple.

Sāmbhavi is the contact that takes place by the mere sight of the Guru, by just a touch, by an exchange of words and brings about something like a revolution in the consciousness of the disciple precipitating the advent of a divine pervasion.

The third is the *Āṇavi* or *māntri,* in which the mantra or ritual or any kind of perceptible means is used to forge the relation. This *Āṇavi* diksha is further subdivided into ten different categories: *smārti,* where the Guru remembers the disciple who is in another place and acts in order to release him from the three bonds into the state of bliss; *mānasi,* where he beholds the disciple in his company and exerts himself mentally for his release; *yaugi,* wherein the Guru following the course of Yoga enters into the body of the disciple and joins his being to his own; *cākṣuśi,* wherein poised in identity with the consciousness of the Lord, the Guru gazes in compassion at the disciple aud destroys his sins; *spārśi,* where the Guru *becomes* the Supreme Lord and as Shiva touches the head of the disciple; *vāciki,* when the mantra is transmitted from the mouth of the Guru to the disciple along with *mudrā, nyāsa* etc. ; *māntri,* where the Guru assumes the body of the mantra and passes into the disciple i.e he energises the mantra in his own consciousness and transmits the mantra-power to the consciousness of the disciple; *hautri* where diksa is given through an elaborate ritual *homa,* worship etc; *śāstri,* where diksha is given to the fit disciple in terms of the Sastra (Veda) ; *ābhiṣecikі,* where Shiva and his Consort are invoked in the sacred Jars, *Kumbha,* and diksha is given through this *abhiṣeka* of the Shiva-Kumbha.

Whatever the nature of the Diksha it is essential that there should be the *śakti-pāta*. The Guru enters into the being of the disciple, takes him up in his vaster consciousness, and—to use the significant symbolism of the Veda—keeps him in his womb for the significant period of *three Days*—mark the three nights spent by Nachiketas at the abode of Yama before he was eligible for the Secret Knowledge of Death—and then delivers him newborn. When the disciple is thus reborn into the second birth, *dvija*, very gods, says the Atharva, hasten to greet the new comer.[1]

---

[1] *Acārya upanayamāno brahmacāriṇam kṛṇute garbhamantah tam rātrin tisra udare bibharti tam jātam draṣṭum abhisamyanti devāh.* (Atharva Veda 11—3—5)

Yoga-Kundalini Upanishad

Of the traditional 108 Upanishads a large number are Vedantic in import. Some can be called Physiological, some Mantra, some Dhyana Upanishads. There are a good many which deal with the technique of psycho-physical Yoga; the Yoga-Kundalini Upanishad comes under this category of Yoga Upanishads. It forms part of the Krishna Yajurveda and consists of three chapters. The subject-matter, as the title indicates, is the Kundalini Yoga.

It begins with an analysis of Chitta, that part of the mind which receives sensations and stores them in memory as *saṁskāras* and *vāsanās*. These vasanas on the one hand and *prāṇa*, the life-force, on the other are responsible, says the Upanishad, for the activity of Chitta. The vasanas and the prana are interconnected and the control of one results in the control of the other. If prana is regulated and brought under check, the vasanas too are controlled and the Chitta falls silent. The Upanishad prescribes a triple method therefor:

1) *Mitāhāra*, regulated and light food—agreeable and nutritious. The system should not be overloaded with solid food; there should be a judicious balancing of the solid and liquid diet, leaving part of the stomach empty.

2) Āsana, position of the body. The Padmasana[1] and the Vajrasana[2] are recommended as they promote a healthy circulation of nervous energies and give a happy stability to the body.

3) *Śakti-cālana,* movement of the Kundalini Shakti which is lying latent at the base of the spine. For this purpose it is necessary, says the Upanishad, to set into motion the Sarasvati Nadi which is situated on the west of the navel. By increasing the length of the inhalation of breath to specified limits the Nadi is set into movement. This is followed by a physical manipulation of the abdominal muscles which shakes the Kundalini; it is stirred from right to left repeatedly till it rises up and enters into the mouth of the Sushumna Nadi.

Pranayama, regulation of the breath, plays an important part in the awakening of this Kundalini Shakti and the Upanishad devotes considerable part of its exposition to the subject. Briefly the process is this :

The sphincter muscles of the anus are contracted and the downward tendency of the Apana breath is arrested ; that *vāyu* is forced upwards. And when this Apana reaches the location of Agni, fire in the region of the navel, the breath of Vayu blows the Agni into a flame. This Agni and the heated Vayu join the *prāṇa* from above which in its turn is forced downward. A terrific state of heat is generated and as a result the Kundalini is pressured into awakening. When so aroused it makes a hissing noise, stands erect and enters the aperture of the Sushumna which is called the Brahma-dvara, door to Brahman. The Prana by itself joins the Kundalini when it enters the Sushumna. And when this takes place there is a steadiness of mind—a condition which when confirmed is termed the *Unmani avasthā*. By practice, the Shakti so awakened and set into movement is led step by step through the several centres or lotuses along the spinal axis, *merudaṇḍa*, till it joins the highest Lotus at the crown of the head, the Sahasrara, and then there is a downpour of Bliss. When this state of Bliss is induced again and again, there grows a condition of being in which one is utterly lost in the consciousness of sheer Ananda and forgets the physical body; there is a growing disassociation between one's consciousness and one's body—with all that it means—and the yogin attains an inner state of release, mukti, which is complete with the shedding of the body at death.

---

[1] Placing the right foot on the left thigh and the left foot on the right thigh.

[2] One heel below the Muladhara and the other over it and siting with the trunk, neck and head in one straight line.

Though the body is subjected to a good deal of pressure during these exercises, it is wrong to attribute its illnesses to Yoga as some are wont to do. The text then gives an interesting list of the causes of the diseases of the body: sleep during day-time, late vigils at night, sexual excesses, mixing in crowds, retention of urine and faeces, unwholesome food and 'laborious mental operation with prana', *prayāsa-prāṇa-cintanat.*

Though the broad lines on which the Kundalini Yoga proceeds is always the same, there are a number of methods and processes which are used, varying with individual requirements. One of the most important of these is the Khechari Mudra described in the Second Chapter of the Upanishad. It is also called the Lambika Yoga. The Khechari Vidya consists of two operations, *kriyās*: *chedana* and *dohana.*

The *frenum linguae,* the lower part of the front of the tongue, is cut, *cheda,* for the space of a hair with a sharp knife once a week and turmeric powder is applied to it. This continues for six months. Thereafter, butter is applied to the tongue and it is stretched in the manner of milking the cow's udder, *dohana.* When the tongue gets sufficiently lengthened, the yogin folds it back to touch and cover the posterior portion of the nostrils: in the throat thereby the breath is stopped completely.

For those who have a natural long tongue the operation of cutting is not necessary. This practice, it is described, gives one many powers *viz.* walking in air, living underground, etc. The Khechari has its own Mantra, the Melana Mantra.

This mudra is called the Khechari because, says the Dhyanabindu Upanishad (v. 82), in this state the Chitta moves in *kha* (*ākāśa*) and also because the tongue goes into the *kha* (the opening of the skull in the throat).

After these descriptions of the different processes employed in Shakti-chalana, the text goes on to stress on the goal of all yoga—attainment of the Indivisible Reality which is reached through the several states of Its One Consciousness, manifest in the individual as *viśva*, *taijasa* and *prajñā*, and in the universe as *virāṭ*, *hiraṇyagarbha* and *īśvara*. It concludes :

"Then that alone remains which is soundless, touchless, formless, and deathless, which is the rasa, eternal, and odourless, which has neither beginning nor end, which is greater than the great and which is permanent, stainless and without decay."

The Upanishad gives an idea how the Yoga of the Tantras could be utilised to reach the goal of the Advaita Vedanta.

Uttara Gita

Though the *Uttara Gita* claims to be a supplement to the Bhagavad Gita purporting to be a subsequent discourse between Arjuna and Sri Krishna, we do not find it included in the existing recensions of the Mahabharata. The nature of the Teaching of this Gita, severely advaitic in character, is also at variance with the all-inclusive, synthetic spirit that breathes in the Utterance of the Lord on the typal battle-scene of the Kurukshetra. However, the place of this Uttara Gita in the philosophical lore of the land has been assured as no less a person than Gaudapada, the Parama Guru of Acharya Shankara has provided it with a lucid commentary.

There are in all 119 verses divided into three chapters. In the first chapter, answering to the question of Arjuna as to how Brahman is to be realised for one's liberation, Sri Krishna describes the way of meditating on Brahman in the Heart.

In the midst of the Space in the heart think of the atman and in the midst of the atman conceive of Space. Conceiving of the atman as identical with the Chidakasha, think of nothing else (as different from the atman). 10

See Brahman without parts, immanent, at all times in the outer space...and in particular at the tip of the nose where the outgoing breath dissolves in space. Watching the breath outward flowing through both the nostrils, and locating the point where it disappears, one should hold the mind there and meditate on Ishwara. 11-12

Pub. Sri Ramakosha Sthanam, Madras-4.

because the tongue goes into the *kha* (the opening of the skull in the throat).

After these descriptions of the different processes employed in Shakti-chalana, the text goes on to stress on the goal of all yoga—attainment of the Indivisible Reality which is reached through the several states of Its One Consciousness, manifest in the individual as *viśva*, *taijasa* and *prajñā*, and in the universe as *virāṭ*, *hiraṇyagarbha* and *īśvara*. It concludes :

"Then that alone remains which is soundless, touchless, formless, and deathless, which is the rasa, eternal, and odourless, which has neither beginning nor end, which is greater than the great and which is permanent, stainless and without decay."

The Upanishad gives an idea how the Yoga of the Tantras could be utilised to reach the goal of the Advaita Vedanta.

Uttara Gita

Though the *Uttara Gita* claims to be a supplement to the Bhagavad Gita purporting to be a subsequent discourse between Arjuna and Sri Krishna, we do not find it included in the existing recensions of the Mahabharata. The nature of the Teaching of this Gita, severely advaitic in character, is also at variance with the all-inclusive, synthetic spirit that breathes in the Utterance of the Lord on the typal battle-scene of the Kurukshetra. However, the place of this Uttara Gita in the philosophical lore of the land has been assured as no less a person than Gaudapada, the Parama Guru of Acharya Shankara has provided it with a lucid commentary.

There are in all 119 verses divided into three chapters. In the first chapter, answering to the question of Arjuna as to how Brahman is to be realised for one's liberation, Sri Krishna describes the way of meditating on Brahman in the Heart.

In the midst of the Space in the heart think of the atman and in the midst of the atman conceive of Space. Conceiving of the atman as identical with the Chidakasha, think of nothing else (as different from the atman). 10

See Brahman without parts, immanent, at all times in the outer space...and in particular at the tip of the nose where the outgoing breath dissolves in space. Watching the breath outward flowing through both the nostrils, and locating the point where it disappears, one should hold the mind there and meditate on Ishwara. 11–12

Pub. Sri Ramakosha Sthanam, Madras-4.

There are indeed more than one way of doing it and these verses throw them into the right focus: And when, as a result of meditation, "that which is to be known is seen seated in the heart", one arrives at a state of peace in the body and there is "no more need of yoga or dharana." (Verse 16) Knowledge now becomes a bar. When the river is crossed what use is there of the boat? So too once you attain to the state of the awareness of the Fullness of the Atman, of what avail is learning derived from books? It is not merely unnecessary, but under certain conditions, even restrictive. Thus freed, one realises Brahman as the underlying essence of All; as oil in the sesamum seed, as ghee in the milk, as smell inside the flower, like fire in fuel, shines the Atman. This self though all-pervasive, is stationed at the centre of the body in the physical, stationed in the centre of the mind in the mental extension. (30) Speaking of the mind, the Gita emphasises that though He is the core of all minds, He does not function through the mind; in fact He awakens all minds.

. . .

In answer to another question: All letters with their mantras merge into the bindu, the bindu penetrates into the nada; into what does the nada merge? (41) the striking answer is given:

> Inside *nāda* which is the supreme state of the anahata sound, is hidden the self-luminous; in that luminosity the mind is hidden; and where that mind dissolves there is the Supreme station of Vishnu.

The second chapter describes the various *nāḍis* (said to be 72,000 in number) in the body and stresses the importance of the Sushumnā, the path of the coiled energy, Kundalini Shakti. She is the creative energy of Brahman and what is in the *anḍa* is in the *pinḍa* as well, the macrocosm is in the microcosm. A process is described by which the macrocosm is superimposed on the microcosmic body and through Brahman in the heart, the Universal and the transcendent are realised.

In a remarkable passage, describing how the body is to be related to the Universe, the text says:

> Below the foot is to be known as Atala loka, the foot as Vitala, the ankle as Nitala, the shanks as Sutala ; the knee is Mahatala and the thighs Rasatala and the hip Talatala, thus have been signified the seven nether worlds.
>
> The nether world below the navel is the fearful fire of hell called Mahapatala, the region of navel is Bhuloka, the stomach is Bhuvarloka, the heart is Svargaloka ..The Yogi should see these worlds in his heart.
>
> In the heart is established the Maharloka, in the neck Janaloka, in the middle of the eyebrows the Tapoloka and in the head the Satyaloka.

The correspondence borne by this system to the classification of the several Planes of existence and their field of operation in the human body, by Sri Aurobindo is too obvious to be missed. Below the feet is the Inconscient with its deepening layers of obscurity. Bhuloka, the Earth, the Physical is organised around the Muladhara, below the navel ; Bhuvarloka, the Antariksha, the Life or Vital above the navel covering the region of the stomach: and Svar, the purer expanses of the Mental and

Maharloka, the luminous world of the Supermental Gnosis, are based on the Heart, the central core of the human body. In the neck which is the centre of creative expression is the locus of Janaloka, the world of creative Delight, in the forehead the centre of dynamic vision and will is the Tapoloka, the world of Consciousness-Power and in the head, the highest centre of man, lies the highest world of Existence, the world of Sat, the world of Ultimate Truth, Satyaloka.

Tracing the course of the *dhyāna yoga* towards the attainment of pure Brahman, the author describes: Prithwi (Earth) merges in Water, Water is absorbed by Fire; Fire devoured by Air. The Air is quaffed by the Akasa and Akasa by the mind. The Mind dissolves in Buddhi, Buddhi in Ahankara and Ahankara in Chitta. When the Ahankara is thus eliminated, there is the state of what is called Unmanibhava, where there is no sense of duality. Chitta merges in Jiva and Jiva rests in the Paramatman.

The final and third chapter calls upon the awakened man to abandon the vain pursuit of book-knowledge, entanglement in the web of learning, *śāstrajāla*, preoccupation with pilgrimages and ritual, and take to single-minded meditation on the Divine. In a memorable verse it is declared:

> To the twice-born, God is in Agni; to those who meditate, God is in the heart; to those of little intelligence, God is in images; and to those of equal vision, God is everywhere. (III. 7)

Rauravagama *

Though it is known that there is a large number of Shaivagama manuals, the texts published so far are very few. They are mostly in old-type manuscript form in private hands, written in granthi, tamil or (some) in nagari characters. As Dr. Jean Filliozat points out in the course of his Introduction to this volume, they have been largely drawn upon by scholars in Archaeology and Iconography who have relied upon these texts for dates regarding the foundation and construction of temples and the specifications of Idols and Images in them. It is a matter of gratification that the Institut Francais propose to bring out a series of these Agamas and if the standard of the present critical edition of the *Rauravāgama* I (the first to be so published) is kept up in the releases to come, the Institut will have done a notable service in the cause of the renaissant religion and culture of India.

Rauravagama is a Shaiva Agama mainly dealing with the rites and rituals in Shiva temples. It was revealed to the world by sage Ruru who in turn received it from Parashurama.[2]

---

* **Rauravagama Vol. I Ed. N. R. Bhatt. Pub. Institut Francais D'Indologie, Pondicherry. P. 223.**

[2] **Narrating the mode of the transmission of this Agama, the text says: The Cause of the world that emerged out of the Shiva**

Among the number of rites described in the work, mention may be made of the *bhasma-snāna*, Ash-bath (P 35), the *Nityotsava-vidhi*,[1] the grand festival in the temples, *mahotsava* of five kinds each with different results[2]. There are elaborate descriptions of the ritual of *snāpana* (bathing the deity with sanctified water), illustrated with diagrams detailing the positions of the various *kalaśas*, jars etc.

It is interesting to note that as a measure to counteract threatened *apamṛtyu*, untimely death, the agama prescribes dance and music in pure unalloyed form in the Shiva temple. (XIX. 8)

The Editor discusses the place of *saura* ritual, sun-worship, in the Shiva ritual and points out that while some texts give it an integral place in the daily ritual of Shiva worship, there are others in which there is no mention at all of Surya worship. Even in the present work the topic does not figure in the text proper and what is found in the Mss. seems to be a later addition. It is appended to the

---

Fire, possessing a form of smokeless effulgence, the Infinite Lord, is the Supreme Master. He imparted to the great lord Srikantha who conveyed it to the Devi. The Devi told to Nandisha and Skanda. From Nandisha. Brahma and Indra; then Urva, from Urva to Richika, and from him Rama (Bhargava) and from him Ruru. (*Patala* III)

[1] offering in the form of a *linga* made up of flowers, in the forenoon; cooked food at noon; and parched rice in the evening.

[2] depending upon the duration of their performance:

ekāham śāntikam proktam tryham ca pauṣṭikam matam,
pancāham jayadam proktam saptāham dhanadam smṛtam,
sarvakāmikāmityuktam navāhotsavakam param. (*Patala* XVIII)

text. The Editor draws attention on every page to the variations in corresponding injunctions in the other agamic texts. His tabulation of these studies is a most valuable feature of this work and does credit to his painstaking, accurate scholarship.

Though these pages are full of rites and rituals there are, here and there, a few points of spiritual import. For instance, speaking of the Mantra, the loaded word, the agama warns those who lack the requisite competence against stitting in judgement on a Mantra. All the gods, says the text, are *mantrātmaka* (mantra-souled) and the Soul of all Mantras is Shiva Himself (III. 27-28). Again, for a Mantra to be effective, it should be properly communicated. Only then can its repetition lead one to gain identity with the life of the Mantra and even merge in it like water in water, like milk in milk.

There is a whole chapter devoted to the exposition of the meaning of Shiva *Mālā Mantra* of 368 letters.

In a brief section on *dhāraṇa-vidhi* (mode of concentration) the text says :

The Godhead (Shiva) is *sakala* (with parts) and *niṣkala* (without parts). The Parts are Sadyojata, Vamadeva, Aghora, Tatpurusha and Ishana. These are the *kalās*, Five Manifestations, the Five Faces of Shiva.

Shiva without parts is the all-pervasive, the supreme beyond the Beyond, residing in the supreme Ether.

The One to be constantly meditated upon is Shiva the Omniscient, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, multifaced, the Soul of all Becoming. Six-limbed is the Yoga consisting of Pratyahara, Dhyana, Pranayama, Dharana, Deliberation and Samadhi.

Of Dharana there are four kinds: Dharana in the navel is *āgneyi;* in the heart, *saumya ;* in the head, *aiśāni ;* all over the body, *amṛta.*

The Mandala*

Dr. Tucci is a renowned scholar in the field of Buddhist Tantrism with considerable practical knowledge of the subject acquired under Tibetan adepts. We have before us an English translation of his original work in Italian, revised and enlarged for this purpose. It gives a reasoned exposition of the Theory underlying the institution of Mandalas (and Yantras) in the Tantra and the mode of its application.

To put the whole matter in a few words: Man, as he is at present, is an incomplete creature suffering from a scission in his consciousness separated as it is with a quantitative and also qualitative gulf from the Parent Consciousness from which it is derived. It is possible for man, with the aid of certain disciplines, to recover that lost unity and assume the nature of the original Whole Consciousness. The Mandala is a pictorial representation of the process of the descent or devolution of the One Supreme Consciousness, step by step, layer by layer, into this creation of multitudinous forms. Equally it provides the scheme for the evolutionary return of the individual unit so formed into the plenitude of the Fundamental consciousness at the head of all Manifestation. This symbol scheme is enlivened by a special occult process of the Tantric ritual and conditions of the archetypal creation are recreated, as it were, by this configuration. This framework is used by the practitioner for the evocation and precipitation of the cosmic process of disintegration and re-integration in his individual mould. Thus the Mandala is no decorative imagery for a ritual. It provides a potent material focus for the operation of subtler forces within and without. In the words of the author: "The cosmic process is expressed in Images, pictorially. The successive phases by which the One, through dichotomy—duality, subject–object—splits into the multiplicty of things, or is darkened and clouded in the sub-consciousness, are imagined in the forms of masculine or feminine deities, beatific and terrifying...Such images... express the intricacy of the psychological forces underlying the multifarious movements of the world. The neophyte can, in this way, grasp this unstable universe of *powers* which are both within him and without. For him the symbol is like a magical and irresistible admission into this formless and tumultuous tangle of forces. With the symbol he grasps, dominates and dissolves it. Through the symbol he gives form to the infinite possibilities."

---

* **The Theroy and Practice of The Mandala by Prof. Guiseppe Tucci. Pub. Rider & Co. London.**

The Mandala as a geometrical projection of the "whole universe in its essential plan, in its process of emanation and of reabsorption," is an ancient conception common to all Asia, the precise patterns varying from country to country. The

Tibetans modelled their Mandalas after the Indian iconography. Whatever the pattern, the author points out, "When the Indian or Tibetan artist designs a Mndala he is not obeying the arbitrary command of caprice. He is following a definite tradition which teaches him how to represent, in a particular manner, the very drama of his soul. He does not depict on a Mandala the cold images of an iconographical text...He gives form to that world he feels surging within him and he sees it spread out before his eyes, no longer the invisible and unrestrainable master of his soul, but a serene symbolic representation which reveals to him the secret of things and of himself. This complicated juxtaposition of images, their symmetrical arrangement, this alteration of calm and of menacing figures, is the open book of the world and of Man's own spirit."

In giving a sympathetic account of the liturgy of the Mandalas in the Tibetan System, Dr. Tucci describes the manner in which the seeker on the Path projects himself in his consciousness into the Mandala, evokes or invokes the Deities, identifies himself with them, 'becomes a God'—a requirement indispensable for true worship of God in the Tantras—and after repeated practice naturalises in of his himself :the state of the Divinity that is at the head soul-career. This liturgy "is a sacrament which enables us to make real in ourselves the revulsion from this to the other plane and which facilitates, by provoking a psychological drama that revolutionizes our interior life, the Return, the palingenesis."

In a special chapter, the author examines the rationale of the application of the Doctrine of Mandla to one's own body and in so doing gives a satisfying picture of the system of the Chakras or Lotuses in the subtle body of man and the process of their revitalization leading to 're-integration' of the human consciousness with the Divine.

The author draws attention to the special contribution of the Tantric System to Human Synthesis by forging between Matter and Spirit a living bridge of the body 'which is the physical support of divine effulgence' and in which the various powers of mind and life are not repressed but transfigured into their higher terms thereby enriching the entire consciousness.

While on the subject of sex-symbolism so often misinterpreted and followed to the very letter by the ignorant, the author dwells upon the different interpretations and applications in different schools: some render it into terms of Mantras, some into special operations of the Nadis Ida, Pingala and the Chandali and in some others "this conjugation takes place, in reality or allegorically, between the initiate and a woman... The reintegration of Vajradhara is accomplished just as Man is born from the fusion of the ovum and the seed. But even in the case where the liturgical rite accomplished in the Mandala requires the presence of a woman, the sexual act is not carried to its natural conclusion. The act is controlled by prana so that the seed instead of descending goes upwards and rises to the 'lotus of thousand petals' on the top of the head and there dissolves itself into the uncreated Source of All."

There are many other interesting and illuminating observations on the parallels between Buddhist and the Shaiva schools of tantrism, the Potency of Mantra, the use of mirrors in 'gnostic liturgy of India to remind the mystic that the images before which the rite is performed are reflections to be burned by the fire of gnosis,' the Indian preference of Yantras (linear designs) to Mandalas, of Mantras to figures of deities, the inner readiness or otherwise of the neophyte to participate, the Way of entry into the Mandals which differs from seeker to seeker and which it is the duty of the Guru to find out by various prescribed means etc. etc. Dr. Tucci describes his own experience in the matter in a Tibetan monastery; but we have been too long.

The whole exposition is lucid, rational and convincing. Written with cogency of thought and utmost economy of expression, this work is a model of objective study.

Among the number of plates included in the book is one of Sri Chakra with full explanation from the *Tantrasāra* of Abhinavagupta.

Sankara and Tantric Tradition

It may be asked what could there be common between a champion of the doctrine of Illusionism like Acharya Sankara and a system which affirms unequivocally the reality of the universe.

Sankara, it is said, preached that the world is unreal, false and the one aim of man should be liberation from it, *mukti*. The Tantra, on the other hand, stresses that all life is a pulsation of the Divine Consciousness and a full enjoyment of it, *bhukti*, in a liberated consciousness is the true object of life. Not *mukti* alone but *bhukti* also. There is, however, a meeting ground.

Brahman is, indeed, the sole Reality. In itself it is the Absolute, there is no other; there is no creation of any kind. Yet, when Brahman is associated with Maya, creation ensues. Names and forms are issued out of the Being of Brahman. Whether these are only an appearance projected from Brahman or a modification of His Being, it is Maya that is responsible for their emergence.

This Maya is a Power, a Shakti, that inheres in Brahman. It is the Shạkti that has brought this vast universe into being; it is She who sustains it and again it is She who dissolves it. She creates and She destroys. Even if the world She creates is truly an Illusion it is She alone who can dissolve that Illusion. The key to the riddle of existence lies in the hands of this great World-Mother. Here is the meeting ground between the thought of Sankara and the philosophy of the Tantras, especially the Shakta system which believes in the supremacy of One All-pervading Shakti, call it by what name you will.

In the centuries preceding the advent of Sankara the ancient tradition of Hinduism—in all its diverse manifestations of thought and practice, the Agamas, the Nigamas, the Vedanta—had struck a low curve of degeneration and was in the throes of a partial disintegration. Overweighted by the heavy crust of outer ritual and caught in the natural course of its ebb of vitality after a period of long efflorescence, Hinduism was reeling under the relentless pressure of Buddhism and was in utter confusion. It was at this time that there was a strong wave of resurgence of the Hindu Dharma on the crest of which stood Acharya Sankara. Repelling the onslaught of the new protestant religion of the Buddhists, Sankara salvaged the pristine tradition of the land originating from the Veda and set it again on its feet albeit in forms suited to the changing conditions of the times.

If the philosophical aspect of the Hindu religion in its reinstatement by Sankara is seen in the metaphysic of his Advaita, the practical side of it is found in his renovation of the ritual and the Sadhana of the Shakta system of the Tantra.

Whatever may have been the ideals and high truths that underlay the practice of Shakta Sadhana originally, a kind of dark age had set in over it when Sankara appeared on the scene. Its practice had been diverted into unhealthy channels and its knowledge was being misused for selfish, malevolent and ignoble purposes by most of its adherents. The system was in disrepute. The Acharya, however, rescued the best of the tradition from its fungus growths and, based upon it, initiated a fresh line of development, a new *Sampradāya*, that has come to be known as *Samaya ācāra*, and reset the ages-old tradition on a pure pedestal.

The central feature of this *Ṣampradāya* is the worship and invocation of the Divine Mother, the Devi. The goal of all ritual and Sadhana is Moksha, realisation of the unity of Atman and Paramatman; no lesser objective is permissible to the votary of this Vidya,* Discipline. The means adopted are twofold:

External: *Pūjā*, worship of the Devi either in embodied form, *Mūrti*, or in the *Sri Chakra* which is a symbolic representation of Her own Form.

Internal: Yoga, practice of *prāṇayāma*, *yama*, *niyama*, etc.; Mantra-Japa and inner adoration; the evocation of the Devi from her status in one's own body where She is ever present in the form of the Kundalini Shakti. This Shakti lying latent at the lowest centre of the body, the *Mūlādhāra*, is to be awakened by a regular prescribed process and led upwards, through the well-known six centres of the subtle body, to join its own supreme Lord-Consciousness at the crown of the head,—a union which liberates the individual Atman from its sense of separativity from the Paramatman.

---

* Called *Śri Vidyā*, Sri being a name of the Devi.

Sankara propagated this *Sampradāya* wherever he went in the course of his country-wide triumphal tour, *Digvijaya*. He installed the *Sri Chakra* wherever he established or caused to establish centres of worship. He wrote expounding the rationale and the processes of this worship of the World-Mother. He underlined the necessity of personal approach to Her in any or all of her myriad forms and stressed the role of Bhakti, devotion, in the catharsis of the human soul. He insisted on Jnana, true. But he gave a new status to Bhakti in the spiritual evolution of man by demonstrating in his own person that only a true Jnanin can be a complete Bhakta.

The Chakras or Lotuses in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga

Though it is the Tantras that have most thoroughly examined the system of Chakras and developed their knowledge into a fine science with innumerable bearings,—physiological, psychological, spiritual and occult—, on the evolution of man, the existence of the Chakras, their function and potentialities have been recognised in many other traditions, both in the East and the West. They were known, for instance, to many of the Christian Mystics in Europe, one of whom, Johann Georg Gichtel, disciple of the famous Jacob Boehme, has given a detailed account of the Chakras with illustrative descriptions based upon, he writes, what he 'has found in himself in divine contemplation, and what he has felt, tasted and perceived.'* This knowledge was also a part of the Egyptian tradition. The Sufis know and speak of them. The Theosophist literature has a good part of it devoted to the subject. In India there are accounts of the various Chakras in the Upanishads, particularly the later ones, in Yoga treatises and Puranas. Naturally enough the expositions vary in details, but by and large, all agree on the fundamentals.

---

* *Vide Theosophia Pratica*

The knowledge of the Chakras and its practical application enters into most of the systems of Yoga in one form or another. The Chakras are described as focal points of power in the body of man which are only partially open. It is a part of Yoga to become aware of them, and, by prescribed processes activise and open them fully so as to release the imprisoned faculties into a freedom of knowledge, power and joy leading to an ultimate union of the liberated soul with its Source-the Infinite.

These power-points are described as located at the knots or centres from where the *nadis*—nerve channels—radiate all around. To the subtle vision of the seers who have perceived, these have the appearance of round wheels, Chakras, and the configuration of the Nadis around the centres gives the appearance of the petals of a lotus. That is why the chakras are also known as Lotuses, *padmas*. Each lotus is seen to have a different number of petals with different hues but we do not need to go into these details as they are not very relevant to our present study.

In a system like Sri Aurobindo's Yoga which takes into account the whole of man, due note is taken of this organisation of Centres or Chakras in the human system. Only they are traced to their deeper origins and given their fuller significance. Behind the exterior body of man, Sri Aurobindo points out, there is a Consciousness which is the real core of his existence. It is this Consciousness which pervades the entire being, animating and enlivening it on all its levels. This Consciousness is lodged in an inner or subtler body which extends behind and above the physical. In has several centres of operation, stations of self-formulation and action in forms suited to the governing principles of the different regions or planes in manifestation. Thus there is a centre of consciousness in the predominantly physical region, another in the life-belt, yet another (or more) in the mind-region and so on. Each centre, be it noted, governs not only the particular plane of being within the individual but is also related to the corresponding extension in the wider universe around. Now this system of centres in the subtle body is reproduced in the physical body with the spinal column as the base and the ganglionic centres as Chakras. To each centre of consciousness in the subtle body, there is a corresponding nodal spot in the physical body. By concentrating on these spots or locations it is possible to apply pressure on the Chakras or lotuses within and open them up thereby gradually getting an entry into their respective planes of consciousness and possession and control over the energies and power natural to their principles of existence.

These Chakras or Centres of consciousness are naturally many; they are not confined to the physical body. For there are some above the head even as there are some below the feet. But in main there are seven important Lotuses, known to yogins, to which Sri Aurobindo gives the following significances in conforming to the traditional knowledge in the light of his own realisation.

First at the base of the spine is the centre of the physical consciousness-*mulādhāra*-which governs the physical being down to the sub-conscient. All movements of a purely physical nature and those deriving from the sub-conscient parts are regulated from this centre of consciousness. It is also the centre of the sex organ and commands sex-action.

Next is the lower vital centre, the *svādhiṣthāna* below the navel, governing the smaller vital movements of petty desires, passions, greed and the like.

Above it in the navel region is the chief vital centre, the *maṇipūraka*; here originate the powerful movements of the vital force, mighty passions, ambition, drive for domination etc.

Rising higher in the region of the heart, there is the heart centre, *anāhata-padma*, commanding the higher vital, the emotional, and the psychic within. Large and noble movements of consecration, surrender, love, harmony well up from this centre in the heart. When it opens, the influence of the psychic begins to expand outward and downward and prepares the way for the emergence of the psychic being.

Next is the throat-centre, *viśuddha*. It governs the movements of the externalising mind, of the physical part of mind which seeks to express in speech what it perceives or receives from its higher levels. When it opens, there comes a power to imbibe the higher consciousness in the physical mind and grow into its light. The neck, throat and the lower face are the regions of influence and action of this centre.

Yet higher is the centre on the forehead between the eye-brows (a little above) which commands, *ājnā*, the inner thought, inner vision and will. It is the centre of the dynamic mind radiating the inner will. When it opens, there comes into work a greater than ordinary mental will, an effectuating power, a force of creation. One sees things behind the outer surface and is also enabled to act with a greater will-force from within. The entire forehead and the eyebrows are its region of activity. This centre is the channel of communication between the Higher Consciousness and the inner mind as also the outer mind.

The highest and the last is one at the crown of the head, the celebrated *sahasrāra*, the thousand-petalled Lotus. Truly speaking, this centre is not within the body; it is above the head, above the brain, and acts as a centre connecting all that is above the mind with the mind proper situate in the body. All the movements of the Higher Mind, the Intuitive Mind, the Illumined Mind and the still higher altitudes of the Consciousness are first received here and then connected with the mental apparatus. It is the centre of communication between the individual consciousness and the infinite Consciousness around and above. When it opens, it acts like a lid opened between the Higher Consciousness and the ordinary mind. Sri Aurobindo points out that though this centre is identified with the brain by some, it is not really so. The brain is a channel of communication between the Ajna and Sahasrara Chakras. This centre is also called *Sūnya* as it gives a sense of Void, entry into a kind of Stillness, a Silence above the activities of the normal mind.

Thus there are seven main centres in the human organism. Sri Aurobindo groups them into four broad divisions :

1) from the crown of the head to the throat, in the region of the mind, three centres : head centre, forehead centre, throat centre ;

2) from shoulder to navel, region of the higher vital : heart centre and navel centre ;

3) from the navel downwards is the region of the lower vital : the penultimate centre;

4) from the root of the spine downwards is the region of the physical consciousness : the physical and sub-physical centres below.

Now, in most of the other lines of Yoga these Chakras or lotuses are sought to be activised and opened up in order to exceed the limits and limitations of the normal human formulation. There is at the base of the spine a reserve of Consciousness-Energy, a store of power which is conceived as a sleeping serpent, *Kuṇḍalinī*. Only a little of this power is active—so much as is needed to sustain the normal operations of life—in the human system with most of it lying latent, asleep. By *prāṇāyāma*, regulation and pressure of breath, Mantra-Japa, and like processes (in which even drugs are used by some as aids) this Kundalini is awakened and galvanised into action; it is led up the central channel in the spinal column, the *suṣumnā*. And as the Kundalini Shakti rises up it strikes the Lotuses which are threaded as it were on that shaft of column, and they open giving entry and conquest to the practicant over their respective domains. The Kundalini—the Energy-end of the manifest divinity in the individual—is ultimately led up to the Sahasrara at the crown of the head where she meets the Superconscient Self, the Lord of the Being and there ensues a wide and intense liberation into the Bliss of Ananda.

In Sri Aurobindo's Yoga these centres need, indeed, to be opened and set into full activity ; the Consciousness-Energy that is lying latent is also to be awakened and freed into an expanding and ascending movement. But this is not done by mechanical or near-mechanical processes. The awakening of the Shakti and the opening and activising of the Centres of Consciousness embodied in man is to come about naturally as a result of the working of the Divine Consciousness, the Yoga-

Shakti to which the sadhaka of the Integral Yoga opens himself. As this Higher or Deeper Consciousness manifests itself there is an effortless blossoming of the Lotuses or Centres of the individual consciousness :

> Our hidden centres of celestial force
> Open like flowers to a heavenly atmosphere. *

Contrary to the opening of the lotuses from below upwards in other yogas, here the centres usually open from above downwards, from the mind centre downward. But there is no definite rule. Whichever are more ripe open first and their planes of consciousness are opened to the sadhaka with their natural movements finding expression in his person. Sri Aurobindo gives magnificent descriptions of this process in his epic *Savitri* to which we will now turn.

II

It was on the eve of the impending stroke of Fate on her beloved husband Satyavan. Śavitri is in deep Tapas, summoning all her latent strength to meet and fight the Adversary. She calls upon the very Mother of the Universe to descend into her :[1]

> In its deep lotus home her being sat
> As if on concentration's marble seat
> Calling the mighty Mother of the worlds,
> To make this earthly tenement her house.

In response to her intense call, the Divine Mother sends down an emanation,

> A face, a form came down in her heart.

---

* *Savitri* : II.12

[1] VII 5

And as the Power from above treads on the expectant grounds of her being, there is a tremendous reaction:

> A mighty movement rocked the inner space.

As a result of the sudden descent of the Force of the Supreme Consciousness that is the World-Mother, like a spring flying into action, the Consciousness-Energy in her body, thrice coiled Kundalini, wakes up from its slumber, raises its hood and stands ready for its imperious ascent:

> A flaming serpent rose released from sleep.
> It rose billowing its coils and stood erect

Once poised for action, the luminous Force storms its way upward licking up the various lotuses that were lying closed on the royal route:

> And climbing mightily, stormily on its way
> It touched her centres with its flaming mouth:

And the lotus-centres awakened by the touch smile and breathe into movement all along the way:

> As if a fiery kiss had broken their sleep,
> They bloomed and laughed surcharged with light and bliss;

And the mystic Serpent

> Then at the crown it joined the Eternal's space.

Not only it joins the Eternal at the summit but it holds together in a living and thrilled communion both the ends of her being,-material and spiritual, with all the interconnecting lotus-centres abloom on the entire terrain:

In the flower of the head, in the flower of Matter's base,
In each divine stronghold and Nature-knot
It held together the mystic stream which joins
The viewless summits with the unseen depths.

As a result,

All underwent a high celestial change...
Powers and divinities burst flaming forth.

Each part of her being, each significant centre is opened to a new working of the Supreme Power. The three centres of the Mind, the hub of the thought-mind in the head, the focussing point of inner will and vision between the eye-brows, and the throat-station which gives expression to what is thought in the mind and what is felt in the heart, all these undergo a felicitous change:

In the country of the lotus of the head
Which thinking mind has made its busy space,
In the castle of the lotus twixt the brows
Whence it shoots the arrows of its sight and will,
In the passage of the lotus of the throat
Where speech must rise and the expressing mind
And the heart's impulse run towards word and fact,
A glad uplift and a new working came.

Sri Aurobindo gives another glorious description,* even yet fuller, when he narrates how in reply to the challenge of Death to show her real power and force,

Savitri looked on Death and answered not...
A mighty transformation came on her...

and

In a flaming moment of apocalypse
The Incarnation thrust aside its veil.

---

*X 4

As a consequence of this Descent and manifestation of the Divinity in her person, the Power that sat enthroned in the summit Lotus concealed from view came down and took its position on the seat of dynamic vision and will :

> The power that from her being's summit reigned,
> The Presence chambered in lotus secrecy,
> Came down and held the centre in her brow
> Where the mind's Lord in his control-room sits ;

It is here that the inner eye opens in the wake of concentration and the truer will follows to execute what is so perceived :

> There throned on concentration's native seat
> He opens that third mysterious eye in man,
> The Unseen's eye that looks at the unseen
> When Light with a golden ecstasy fills his brain
> And the eternal's wisdom drives his choice
> And eternal Will seizes the mortal's will.

Next was dynamised into activity the spring of expression in the throat to manifest in Word and action the Thought of the Eternal :

> It stirred in the lotus of her throat of song,
> And in her speech throbbed the immortal Word,
> Her life sounded with the steps of the World-soul
> Moving in harmony with the cosmic Thought.

And further. The manifesting Deity descended into her heart and released the immaculate soul-force latent in the psychic depths :

> As glides sun into the mystic cave
> Where hides his light from the pursuing gods,
> It glided into the lotus of her heart
> And woke in it the Force that alters Fate.

Then came the turn of the seat of desire and passion, movements of constricted life-force. Taken up by the incoming Power its very desires were uplifted and transformed into tongues of soaring aspiration :

> **It poured into navel's lotus depth,**
> **Lodged in the little life-nature's narrow home,**
> **On the body's longings grew heaven-rapture's flower**
> **And made desire a pure celestial flame.**

And finally, comes the climax, the culminating movement which joins matter and spirit, Heaven and Earth :

> **(It) broke into the cave where coiled World-Energy sleeps**
> **And smote the thousand-hooded serpent Force**
> **That blazing towered and clasped the World-Self above,**
> **Joined Matter's dumbness to the Spirit's hush**
> **And filled earth's acts with the Spirit's silent power.**

Each Principle in Creation, each Power in manifestation has a centre of lodgement and operation in the body. The Physical, the Vital, the Psychic, the Mental, each of these has its Lotus. What is the specific centre for the greatest of all, the real source of all, the Supermind, that is the crown of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga ?

There is no mention of such a Centre in treatises on the subject. And that is natural considering that so far no one is known to have received in himself the direct and living Dynamis of the Supermind. It is only Sri Aurobindo and the Mother who have devoted their present life to this object and succeeded in their *tapasyā* to receive and embody the Supramental Truth for establishment in the Earth-consciousness. And we have it on their authority that the Centre which receives the Supramental Consciousness is above the head, *above the thousand-petalled Lotus*.

Indeed, the Truth Power is not confined to that Centre alone. From there it extends, pervades the whole of the system, infuses itself in all the centres, known and unknown. Of this Supermind, says Sri Aurobindo, there are seven Suns to be received in the seven Lotuses of the being:

"The Sun of Supramental Truth,-Knowledge-Power originating the supramental creation.

Descent into the Sahasradala.

2. The Sun of Supramental Light and Will-Power, transmitting the Knowledge-Power as dynamic vision and command to create, found and organise the supramental creation.

Descent into the Ajna Chakra, the centre between the eyes.

3. The Sun of Supramental Word, embodying the Knowldge-Power, empowered to express and arrange the supramental creation.

Descent into the Throat centre.

4. The Sun of Supramental Love, Beauty, and Bliss, releasing the Soul of the Knowledge-Power to vivify and harmonise the supramental creation.

Descent into the Heart-Lotus.

5. The Sun of Supramental Force dynamised as a power and source of life to support the supramental creation.

Descent into the navel centre.

6. The Sun of Life-Radiances (Power-Rays) distributing the dynamis and pouring it into concrete formations.

Descent into the penultimate centre.

7. The Sun of Supramental Substance-Energy and Form-Energy empowered to embody the supramental life and stabilise the creation.

Descent into the Muladhara."*

Vide *The Hour of God* (P 93)

Indian Culture and the Tantra

When we speak of the culture of any people as religious or ethical or aesthetic, what is meant is that the main Truth-Idea which motivates and governs the life-current of their civilisation is of that order. There are other elements indeed but they form secondary notes in the cultural tone of the society. Thus Greek culture was primarily an intellectual one in which all the life-movements subserved the one dominant aim of mental development. The Roman was typically materialist in which organisation of the external physical life in perfect order, with a view to uninhibited enjoyment and aggrandisement, was the main object. The Japanese culture is known,—at any rate it was so till it took a wrong direction of emulation of the West in the 19th century—for its aesthetic values which are stamped on even the most common movements of the people. Similarly the Indian tradition and culture has been all along spiritual. Whatever the age and whatever the sphere of activity, it is the spiritual motif that has been towering over all others, imposing its character on her religion, art, polity, sciences, in fact on every branch of the multitudinons expression of her soul-energy.

Thus at the very beginning of her recorded history we have the spectacle of the Vedic society in which all life was studded with spiritual and psychological symbols. The leaders of men during those times were spiritual seers, the Rishis who were aware of a mighty Presence brooding over the entire creation, immanent in it not only generally but in every part of it. Everything in the physical universe was looked upon as a symbol and form of Something above or behind it and the whole of life was regarded in this context. The world was seen as an emantion from one Supreme God, maintained and led by several godheads deriving from the One. This creation was indeed recognised to be full of imperfections, falsehoods, *ānṛtasya bhureh*, and it was given as the life's mission to grow out of that condition of ignorance and mortality into a higher state of Light and Immortality. This was possible for man because of the ever-present help of the Gods from above who extend their hand of friendship to man aspiring from below. And this help was sought and secured through a means of self-surrender and dedication of oneself to the various Gods, an inner discipline which was deployed in the outer symbol of Yajna, Sacrifice, in which offerings were made to the Gods and their favour invoked. The whole of life, individual and collective, was set in this scheme by the Rishis who, though not men of ratiocinative intelligence in our sense of the term, were yet gifted with an intuitive faculty not yet inhibited in that early age of human development. They perceived in their direct vision the spiritual verities behind physical appearances and interpreted everything on that basis, erecting symbols of the circumstances of everyday life to remind and direct the mind of man to the greater Reality of the Spirit that lent significance to his life-journey on earth.

This spiritual character of India's Ideal and Culture has continued and maintained itself throughout the long stretch of her history across the centuries. The next great age after the Vedic period was the age of the *Upaniṣad* which saw a great efflorescence of the higher faculties of the mind. Sages and thinkers sought to reach the Reality of life through the means of their intellect which yet functioned with the background of the spiritual vision of the Vedic seers. They proceeded through the way of the awakened mind to re-find and confirm the truths which were perceived and proclaimed by the Rishis of an earlier epoch but had got encrusted and lost to experience in the period of decline and decay of the Vedic civilisation. The *Upaniṣads* represent a movement of rediscovery and revival of the legacy of Knowledge, Jnana-Kanda of the Veda; the ritualist part of the Vedic heritage was sought to be recovered and conserved by the *Brāhmanās* which took pains to record the minutiae of the ceremonial aspect of the older religion with interpretations and explanations to suit the mentality of a later age to which the ancient Vedic symbolism had become unintelligible.

Thus the *Upaniṣads* revived the Jnana Kanda of the Veda; the *Brāhmanās* took up the Ritual, Karma Kanda. But there was another aspect of the Vedic Wisdom, the esoteric or spiritual discipline to realize in life the truths enunciated in the Jnana Kanda, a practical method for the elevation of life into the light and the height of the Gods, which was communicated only to the few initiate leaving the rest of the common people to the care of the preparatory cult of the Ritual. This esoteric line of discipline, *sādhanā*, was taken up and carried forward by another Movement, that of *Agamas* or or Tantras which went on to develop the dynamics of Yoga. The Tantras thus form a natural development in the national effort at the resuscitation of the Vedic heritage, as much as the *Upaniṣads* and the *Brāhmanās* do.

The Tantras declare, repeatedly, their foundation in the Veda, claim their doctrines to ensoul the Truth of the Veda (*vedātmakam*) and some describe the Tantra as the Fifth Veda. They are not grafts from an alien tradition or civilization as alleged by some. Nor are they a departure or revolt from the authentic Shruti or the Veda. Sri Kapali Sastriar points out in his writings* how the Vedic tradition in its essentials is upheld and carried forward in the Tantra: the Gods of the Veda continue in the Tantra though under different names and on occasions with the same names; at times even the very mantras of the Veda are bodily incorporated in the Tantra. The central feature of the Vedic religion viz. Yajna continues in the form of Yoga. Whatever differences there are in the teachings of the Tantras they are really in the nature of revisions and adjustments indispensable to meet the requirements of an age or ages which came far later when the society had developed further in the evolution of its mental and emotive faculties. Thus, all were admitted to the sanctuary of the Teaching irrespective of the social order to which they belonged. Higher Knowledge could no longer be confined to the privileged classes alone, the Brahmanas. The doors were opened to all who sought for it. Similarly women also were declared eligible to share in the benefits of the Scripture. These features of the Tantras were an inevitable outcome of the process of the broadening of enlightenment and culture in the society.

---

* Vide *Lights on the Ancients; Further Lights: the Veda & the Tantra.*

Then the Tantras focus their attention on certain aspects of the complex human personality which were either ignored or not given their full value in the older teaching of the Vedanta. The harmonious balance struck among man, God and Nature in the Vedic conception of life had been disturbed in the succeeding ages, beginning with the later *Upaniṣads*. Stress came to be laid on the Purusha, the Self, the Atman as the Central reality of existence in preference to Prakriti whose activity was either relegated to an inferior position or dismissed as a figment of Maya. And this meant in practice withdrawal of serious interest and occupation from Life—the field of Nature. A negative attitude to this world-existence gained ascendency. All higher effort of man was directed to the discovery of the Self within himself or behind the All. To this end was enjoined a progressive elimination of the activities of the not-Self, Nature, and an increasing identification with the pure Self. The body and its energies, life-force and its powers, the mind and its faculties—all these were denied their due expression and the soul or self alone was held to be worthy of one's sole occupation. Not that this became the rule of life for the generality of men. It was rigorously pursued only by the elect few. But they were the mentors who set the norm and Ideal. And it cast its shadow on the society, discouraged life-expression, promoted a general non-worldly bias. The Tantra seeks to correct this imbalance. Not the Self, the Purusha, but the Prakriti, the Shakti—of which Prakriti is the outer executive form and energy—is its preoccupation. We are of course not allowed to forget that the Shakti is the Power of the Supreme Purusha, the Lord or the Lord *as* Power. The gaze of the Tantra is directed to the Divine Shakti and the manifestation of that Shakti in man and in the world. To awaken to the workings of the Shakti, the Divine Mother of this Creation, in all the activities in the Universe, to uplift oneself and participate in that Lila is the ideal held up here. For this purpose, each faculty of the being, the mind, the life, the body, all the energies are cultivated, purified and surrendered to the Divine Shakti as channels of Her manifestation and delight. In a word, the Divine is sought for and found not merely in the depths of the soul but in the whole of one's being, in all its parts, each being looked upon as a dwelling place of the Divinity. Nothing is excluded. All is conceived as a manifestation of One Shakti (for Her own Delight or for the Delight of Her Lord) and man fulfills his life in the measure in which he liberates himself from the bonds of limitation imposed by Ignorance and participates in that Play, Lila, in a full-fledged manner. Life is restored to its rightful place in the cosmic scheme.

The Tantra is thus a great movement for the uplift of human existence, for the recovery of the whole of man to God. All life is sought to be spiritualised and given high value as a field and means for the manifestation of the Divine. That some abuses crept in the rendering of this glorious vision in practice, in the application of its daring methods is no reason for its deprecation.

Not only in its aim but in its method too, the Tantra seeks to extend the claim of the Spirit on all the members of the society, not merely on those who are favourably circumstanced by reason of their mental or inner development. The Tantra takes each man where he is and points to him the Way. It classifies men into three broad classes, the normal unregenerate man, *paśu*, the aspiring dynamic man *vīra*, the enlightened man of godly qualities *deva*, and prescribes different modes of approach to each so as to enable every one to participate in the cosmic progression in the manner most natural to his nature and equipment. These are the three *ācāras* that the Tantra has laid down.

To assist the individual in his upward effort, the Tantra seeks to create a favourable environment. Centres of collective worship, congregational meetings in the temples and other sanctified places, are promoted in order to enliven the individual aspiration under the impact of the collective pressure and buttress it with external aids of ceremonial religion. This aspect of the Tantra has exerted a large influence on the development of mediaeval and modern Hinduism, particularly in the institution of Image worship with its profound import, and the construction and maintenance of Temples as focii of living Spiritual Force.

The Tantras are thus not only in line with the age-old tradition of India but have been a great force in correcting some of the ill-effects of the one-sided growth that crept in the course of its long history and threatened to give a wrong direction to the evolution of her humanity. The Tantras have carried further the original Vedic imperative of harmony between Matter and Spirit and made a brave attempt to charge the entire gamut of life, individual and collective, with the Breath of the Spirit.

PART—II

THE VEDA

Purusha Sukta

The Purusha Sukta, Hymn to the Supreme Person, is one of the most important hymns in the Vedic literature enunciating certain key principles that underlie the Creation, the *First Laws*, as it calls them. It has also the unique distinction of appearing in all the four Vedas,[1] though with variations, and it is used for varied purposes, e.g. Japa, Homa, Puja, Prayaschitta (expiation), etc. In view of its importance this hymn has been the subject of study and interpretation by numerous scholars representing the diverse schools of philosophy and religion that abound in India. This study[2] is an exposition of the hymn in Kannada from the standpoint of *Śivādvaita*, the central Doctrine of the Virashaiva Religion. The author, Sri Chennabasaveshwar, is well-read both in the ancient scriptures and the researches in modern Indology; he takes note of the main lines of thinking on the subject and seeks to synthesize their conclusions as far as possible in the spirit of Sri Aurobindo's approach to the Vedas as Books of eternal Knowledge. He draws upon confirmatory dicta from the vast literature of the Shaiva Agamas and gives striking parallels to thought-expressions in the Veda. For important terms he gives satisfactory etymological derivations and where things are uncertain he provides all the available material for the reader to come to his own conclusions.

---

[1] The Purusha Sukta as found in the Rig Veda (X. 20) consists of 16 verses. It is ascribed to Rishi Narayana. In the Shukla Yajurveda—Vajasaneyi Samhita—(31.1) it has 22 verses and this is the text chosen for comment in this work. It occurs in the Taittiriya Aranyaka of the Krishna Yajurveda (III. 12) with 18 verses. It is found in the Sama Veda Aranyasamhita (IV. 3) and in the Atharva (19.6).

[2] Purusha Sukta *by S. V. Chennabasaveshwar.* Pub. Srimat Sharanagiri Shivayoga Brihanmath, Halvi (Mysore State).

Before proceeding to deal with the subject-matter of the study, it is necessary to know the broad principles of his philosophy, the *Ṣat-sthala Siddhānta* and its variations from standpoints of major significance in the Darshanas. And this need has been amply met in the learned introduction to the book by Sri Nagesh Sastri who has analysed the different approaches to the Supreme Reality with a clarity, objectivity and precision that evoke admiration.

The Supreme Reality is ineffable, indefinable, without Form, without Quality, *nirguṇa*. When, as a result of Maya which is inherent in It, It assumes Name and Form, It lends Itself to be described thus and thus. But that is not the eternal Truth. What is *nitya*, eternal, is the Reality, Brahman, without Form; the world of name and form is transitory, *anitya*, and therefore really unreal. This is the doctrine of the Kevala Advaita popularised by Shankara.

As against this there is the viewpoint which sees the Supreme Reality as Formful. When scriptures refer to It as *nirguṇa* or *nirākāra,* quality-less or formless, it does not mean that It has no qualities or form. It only underlines the fact that It is free from limitation by quality or form. The Form is as real as the One with form. The soul, Jiva and the World of name and form, are as real as the Brahman, their creator. The Lord is both the material and the efficient Cause. The universe is not *vivarta,* a seeming formation, but a *pariṇāma,* a natural development of Brahman. Whether the Jiva and the World (Matter) are permanent and different though subordinate realities as in the Dvaita System or they are eternal yet dependent realities constituting the body of the Lord as in the Vishishtadvaita, what is affirmed is that the World and the Jivas evolving in it are real.

The philosophy of the *Ṣaṭ-Sthala* of the Vira-shaivas is different. Here the Paratattva, Supreme Reality, is conceived as *both* with Form and without Form. This Ultimate is the *sthala* (*stha*-source and *la*-goal), the Divine who is at the head of Creation and is called Shiva. Inherent in Him there is a Conscious Force, a *Vimarśa Śakti,* Self-aware Power. This Shakti has a state of self-involution and a state of self-expansion. In the former condition the Supreme is unmanifest; in the other He is manifest. That is to say, the Para Shiva remains form-less or becomes form-full according to the mood of His Shakti. That is His Lila. Shiva who is *sthala* becomes, in His Divine Play, two: *liṅga* and *aṅga, śiva* and *jīva.* The Shakti that is inalienable is *Kalā* as related to *liṅga,* and *Bhākti* as related to *aṅga.* (Bhakti here means a spirit of self-surrender and worship.)

The Linga (i.e. Shiva as Linga), Shiva with Form, is *iṣṭaliṅga* attainable by the soul in waking state, in the gross form, the *tyāgāṅga*. The *iṣṭaliṅga* further modifies itself into two: the *ācāraliṅga*, practical, in which the *tyāgāṅga* develops faith, *bhakti*, and becomes *bhakta-sthala*; the *guruliṅga*, the preceptive, in which the *tyāgāṅga* has strong faith and becomes *maheśa-sthala*.

Shiva with and without Form, *sakala and niṣkālā*, is *prāṅalinga*, attainable by the soul in dream state in the subtle form, *bhogāṅga*. The *prāṇaliṅga* also modifies itself into two: the *śivaliṅga*, auspicious, in which the *bhogāṅga* focusses exclusive concentration and becomes thereby *prasādi-sthala*; the *caraliṅga*, the active, with which when the *bhogāṅga* gets identified in experience it becomes the *prāṇa-liṅga-sthala*.

Shiva without Form, *niṣkala*, is *bhāvaliṅga* attainable by the soul in state of deep sleep, in the causal form, *yogāṅga*. The Bhavalinga too modifies itself into two: the *prasādaliṅga*, the gracious, by meditation on which the *yogāṅga* gets established in a joyous *śaraṇasthala*; the *mahāliṅga*, the great, by identification with which the *yogāṅga* attains a state of identity, *aikya-sthala*.[1]

Thus the Divine Reality admits of both the states of form and no form. The evolution of the

---

[1] These are the six poises *ṣaṭ-sthalas*, of the Divine on the double line of manifestations as *liṅga* and as *aṅga*.

Universe proceeds by a manifestation of 36 Tattvas, principles[1]: Shiva, Shakti, Sadashiva, Ishwara; Sadvidya, Maya, Five Kanchukas (of *kāla, niyati, rāga, vidyā, kalā*), Purusha, Prakriti, Mahat, Ahankara, Five *tanmātras, manas,* Five organs of perception, Five of action and the Five elements. When his Shakti blossoms, Shiva manifests in these 36 all-pervading *tattvas*, He extends Himself into All This—yet all the while never ceasing to be what He has been always and ever will be in His Utter existence. In a word, this creation is a self-formulation of the Reality that is Divine. At every grade of the manifestation there is, in principle, an identity between the Creator and the created, the *liṅga* and the *āṅga* and it is the object of this discipline to realise their union at each status so as to achieve a complete harmony in oneness between the Shiva and the Jiva.

Thus what is manifested here is the Divine Reality; what manifests is the Shakti that is inherent in the Being of the Reality; what Form and Name is assumed in the manifestation is as real as the Reality that is shaped into that Form and Name. This is the first truth declared in the Purusha Sukta which opens:

> Thousand-headed is the Supreme Being, thousand-eyed, thousand-footed. Embracing the earth all around, He yet exceeded it by a span.

---

[1] which are grouped either under three categories of *Cit*, *Cit-Acit* and *Acit*, 5, 6 and 25 respectively or into 11 Linga Tattvas and 25 Anga Tattvas.

Thousand here is not a numerical figure. If it were so, the author points out, there would be two thousand eyes and two thousand feet for a thousand heads! A thousand signifies infinitude, *ananta*. He extends Himself into Space and He transcends it.[1] Not only Space, but Time also.

> The Supreme Being is this all, that which was and which shall be. He is the Lord of Immortality and of what grows by food.
>
> Such is His grandeur; and yet greater than that is the Supreme Being. A fourth of Him is all beings, the three-fourths is the Immortal in Heaven.

What are these *three* parts? asks the author and answers: they are Sat, Chit, Ananda which are denoted by *Guru-Liṅga-Jaṅgama* or Ishtalinga-Pranalinga-Bhavalinga in the *Satsthala*.

> With His three-fourths Above rose the Supreme Person; one fourth of Him was again here.
>
> Thence on all sides He spread out as that which eats and that which eats not.

---

[1] The author recalls another verse in the Rig Veda which says that He has neither Head nor Feet. There Head stands for beginning, *ādi*, and Feet for end, *anta*. The Supreme has neither; what we see is only the middle i.e., only a part of Him.

Thus in the Vedic conception the Supreme Godhead has Form and no Form. He is both *sākāra* and *nirākāra*.

The author further observes that the Head, Eye and Feet indicate the three forms of the Shakti (inherent in the Lord) which are put out for purposes of manifestation: Iccha Shakti, Power of Will, Jnana Shakti, Power of Knowledge, Kriya Shakti, Power of Action.

> From Him was born the Cosmic Egg and from that the Person.
>
> Born, He reached beyond the earth, behind as well as before.[1]

Thus is declared in unequivocal terms that All is a direct manifestation of the Supreme Godhead.

Then the Hymn speaks of the Primal Sacrifice performed by the Gods with this Cosmic Person as the oblation. That is to say, the Supreme offered His own Body in sacrifice and the Creation is the result. The author expounds the meaning of the word *Yajña* with apt quotes from varied authorities, grammarians included, and traces the development of the different significances it has acquired.[2] All the diverse manifestations of life and sub-life are the products of this self-sacrifice, the supreme holocaust as described by Sri Aurobindo. All orders and tiers in creation proceed from the corresponding concentrations in the Cosmic Being carrying their particular potencies. Thus:

> His Face became the Brahmin; His Arms became the King; His Thighs the Vaishya, and from His Feet was born the Shudra.

[1] or, He extended Himself and created the earth and the bodies.

[2] The author closely follows the method of Sri Aurobindo in giving the mystic significances of the number *seven*, *cow*, *horse*, *goat* etc. We whole-heartedly agree with him in his rejection of the rendering of *chandānsi* (verse 10) by Griffith as 'spells and charms'. His reading of the derivation *chandayati*, *alhādayati*, *chandaḥ*, in the context of *ramaniyārtha-pratipādaka śabdaḥ kāvyam* of the later rhetoricians is particularly happy.

> The Moon was born of His Mind, the Sun of His Eye, Indra and Agni of His Mouth and Vayu was born from His Breath.
>
> From His Navel arose the firmament, from His Head the heaven, from the Feet the earth and from the Ear the quarters. So they fashioned the worlds.
>
> ...With sacrifice the gods worshipped the Sacrifice (embodied in the Cosmic Person). These were the First Ordinances; they reach up to the Heaven where are the ancient Gods, the *sādhyas*.

And "This mighty Being" declares the Rishi, "*I know*. He is of the hue of the Sun, beyond the reach of Darkness. Creating all Forms, all Names, He the Wise glories. Him who was anciently lauded by Brahma the Creator and by Indra with full knowledge of the Four Quarters, he who knows Him thus becomes immortal *here*; there is no other path for release."

Before closing we might give here a free rendering of the six verses in this Hymn which are not found in the version in the Rig Veda:

> Coming out of the Waters and too of the sap of Earth, He was above the Creator. Twashtr, the celestial architect, comes designing His Form; of that Supreme Person the Universe was first born. I know this Great Being of the hue of the Sun, beyond the reach of Darkness. He who

knows Him thus becomes immortal here; there is no way else for release. The Lord of the peoples moves within the womb. Unborn He becomes manifoldly. The Wise Know His Source, Creators aspire for this station of the Rays. He who blazes for the Gods, He who is in the vanguard of the Gods, Who was born ere the Gods, to that Splendour Creative, Salutation!

Thus declared first the Gods, creating the Light of the Supreme: of the Brahmana who knows thus, the Gods shall come under control.

Beauty and Opulence are Thy wives; Day and Night Thy sides; the Constellations Thy form. The Ashwins are Thy wide mouth. Grant this our desire Here; grant that Yonder; grant us All.

The Godhead in the Rig Veda

While welcoming an earlier work of the author[1] on the Vedic heritage, we had occasion to commend his efforts to make known the real character of the Wisdom that lies concealed under the liturgical exterior of the hymns of the Veda. The present book[2], the second in the series, on the *Rig Veda and the Nature of the Godhead*, continues the good work. It consists of 75 carefully selected verses—dwelling upon several aspects of the Divinity—from all over the Rig Veda with word-for-word renderings in Kannada and copious annotations underlining the unity of thought that runs throughout and recalling parallel utterances in the Epics, the Upanishads and other authentic Sanskrit literature.

It had been all along propagated by scholars from the West—we trust no one gives serious credence to that theory today— that the Rishis of the Veda were all polytheists, worshipping a multitude of gods according to the exigencies of the situation. Not only that, but they had the clever habit of praising each god as if he were the highest when he was addressed : for this tendency a special term, *Henotheism*, was coined by Max Muller. The turn to monotheism, worship of only One God, we were told, came much later in the age of the Upanishads, though the beginnings of this movement are to be seen in some of the hymns of the latest (?), the tenth Book. Needless to say this is a very superficial and misleading view of the matter. As Sri Aurobindo has pointed out in his exposition of the Secret of the Veda, to the Rishis of the age represented by the Rig Veda, the Supreme Godhead is always One, though for purposes of manifestation there are put out several emanations of Himself, called by different names. And they are not merely names; they are powers and personalities of the One Godhead, individuations for specific purposes in the building and the governance of the Universe. "All the Gods with a single mind, a common intuition, move aright in their divergent paths towards the one Will."[1]

---

[1] *Rigvedada amogha suktiratnagalu.*

[2] Rigvedavu Bhagavatsvarupavu. *By Vidwan N. S. Anantarangacharya,* Sanskrit College, Bangalore.

Sri Anantarangacharya draws attention to this special feature of the Gods in the Hymns and cites the authority of Badarayana, Sayana and Yaska in support. Indeed, Yaska is quite unambiguous on this point. *Eka ātmā bahudhā stūyate*, the One Atman is lauded manywise, he declares. (Nirukta VII.4) The Gods are, besides, *itaretara janmānaḥ, itaretara prakṛtayaḥ*; they have a mutuality of birth, a mutuality of nature. Each is not only an emanation of the Supreme Godhead, but he has behind him all the other Gods to support him, i.e. the whole of the Godhead is at his back. Each God gives birth to the other Gods, he is the substance out of which the others are formed: now it is Surya giving birth to Agni, now it is Agni who brings into being Surya and so on. To quote a typical Rik illustrating this truth:

---

[1] Rv. VI. 9.5.

> Thou art Varuna, O Fire, when thou art born, thou becomest Mitra when thou blazest high; in thee are all the gods, O son of force, thou art Indra for the mortal giver. (Rv. V.3.I)

With the advent of Agni, the Force of Will and Aspiration, the dross of impurity in the being is burnt up and there forms a state of vast Purity embodied by Varuna; as the force of Agni breaks down the wall of ego and self-regarding desire leading to strife, there is the birth of Love and Harmony of Mitra in the being of the seeker, preparing the ground for the manifestation of the other Powers of the Godhead; to the mortal who gives himself to the Divine, Agni reveals himself as the bounteous Lord of the Divine Mind, raining the showers of illumination.

The entire universe has been brought into existence out of the primal darkness by God Agni:

> The whole world was swallowed and concealed in darkness; Agni was born, and it became manifest. The deities, the earth, the heavens, the waters and the plants gloried in his friendship. (Rv.X 88 2)

The learned author points out how in the Upanishadic account of Creation also, it is Tejas, Fire, that is mentioned as the first to be produced by Brahman on the move to create. He is the first birth of life in the sapless, dry matter, *śuṣkād jīvo janiṣṭhaḥ* (Rv. I. 68.2). He is the conscious thinker in those who are not seers, *ayam kaviḥ akaviṣu pracetaḥ* (Rv. VII. 4 4). To recall another Rik which describes the ubiquitous nature of Agni:

> He is the being and non-being in the supreme ether, in the birth of the Understanding in the lap of the indivisible mother. Fire comes to us as the first-born of the Truth, he is the Bull and milch Cow in the original existence. (Rv. X 5.7).

Equally fundamental is the position of Indra. For, the Divine Lord as Indra is not only the ruler of the heavens of the Gods but of this world of ours as well, *ubhayasya rājan*, sovereign of both the worlds (Rv. VI.19.1), *bhuvo janasya divyasya rājā* (VI. 22 9). It is he who breaks through the thick opacity of the hard Rock of Matter and floods all sides with the Waters of divine Consciousness, who as the monarch of the peoples, on the outbreak of the Dawn of Knowledge, forms of the firmaments of the Pure Mind and makes the Sun of Truth shine aloft. (VI. 30.5).

He has not only created the universe and the beings that people it but has also distributed formulations of his Becoming in appropriate embodiments:

> In growths of Earth he has extended the breath of life; set Force in the Horse, Milk in the Cow;

set the *Will in the hearts*. Agni in the Waters; in the heaven the Surya, and Soma in the Hill. (Rv.V.85.2)

It is he again that has concentrated himself at certain points in the cosmic Extension as leading centres of manifestation, the Vibhutis:

> Brahma, the king of the Gods, Leader of the Seers, of the Sages the Rishi, the Bull of the creatures; Falcon amid the birds of flight, among fell weapons the Axe...(Rv. IX 96.6).

As the author observes, one is naturally reminded of the narration of his Vibhutis by the Lord in the Gita, which ends with the famous declaration:

> Whatever beautiful and glorious creature thou seest in the world, whatever being is mighty and forceful, know to be a very splendour, light and energy of Me and born of a potent portion and intense power of my existence. (X.41)

To the author, as to us, the Rig Veda is essentially a Book of *Upāsanā* a Record of the spiritual strivings and realisations of the ancient Rishis serving as a guide to posterity on the Road of the Yoga of fufilment of the human into the Divine and the blossoming of the Divine into the human. The Lord of the worlds is not only in the heavens above, not merely in the expanse around in the universe, but he is also stationed in the Heart of every creature:

> An immortal Light, set inward for seeing, a swiftest mind within in men that walk on the way. (Rv. VI.9.5).

He holds in his hands all mights; sitting in *the secret cave* he upholds the gods in his strength. Here men who hold in themselves the Thought come to know him when they have uttered the Mantras formed by the heart. (Rv. I.67.2)

By the chants of the Mantras that affirm His omnipresence and omnipotence, the lauds that glorify, the very body of God grows in stature; *vardhatām asya tanuḥ stomebhirukthaiṣca śasyamāna.* (Rv. VI.24.7)

To this Master of existence, at once the most ancient, *pūrva*, and the ever-new, *naviyasa*, give, give your soulful adoration, give yourself wholly. For such a one attaineth to the illumined station which is the Goal most cherished, *yujyaṁ cit abhyasat* (Rv. I.156.2), where the final word is:

Tvam asmākaṁ, tava smasi, Thou art ours, We are Thine. (Rv. VIII.92.32).

The Nivids

The Nivids are an important part of the Vedic literature though they have not so far received adequate attention from modern scholarship. The recent study by Sri Niyogi* is to be welcomed for the very systematic manner in which the subject is discussed, the origin and language of the Nivids, their role in the Vedic liturgy, the mode of their application and the light they shed on the institution of Sacrifice of the ancient mystics.

The Nivids are short formulas to be used in the Soma libations and also in the daily *svādhyāya* of the Sakala rescension of the Rig Veda, for the invocation of certain important Deities to participate and partake in the worship and yoga of the Vedic initiate. They are cast in pithy prose mantras and as such do not form part of the Rik Samhita which consists of metrical hymns. They do not belong to the Yajur Veda either for the reason that they are used by the *Hotṛ* in the ritual of the *Bahvṛcas* (followers of the Rig Veda). They have been preserved as *khila,* appendices to the Rik Samhita. The Nivids are eleven in number, each containing a number of clauses, *padas*, the total making 175. They are given in the Sankhyayana

---

* **A critical Study of the Nivids.** *By S. P. Niyogi.* **Pub. Firma K. L. Mukhopadyaya, Calcutta.**

Srauta Sutra (VIII 16-25). The names of their seers are not mentioned though some hold that they are of Rishi Vishwamitra—a hypothesis which the author rejects convincingly.

There are a number of references in the text of the Rig Veda itself to *Nivids* where they are described as potent means of creation of the peoples of Manu (I.96.2), to be recited by men of thinking (VI.67.10) etc. Scholars differ whether these Nivids are the same as the short formulas now under study. Sri Niyogi holds that they are. He believes that the Nivids are more ancient than the Riks in view of the simplicity and directness with which they give expression to truths which came to be clothed in such elaborate trappings of mystic language in the later Hymns, and that it is these ancient potent formulas which are referred to by the Rishis in the Rig Veda for their special efficacy.

The Aitareya Brahmana describes the Nivids as the womb of the chants of laudation[1], as the means of ascent to the supernal worlds.[2] They are used in the three libations of Soma[3], recited without accent, in *ekaśruti*, in accordance with the injunctions laid down in the Brahmana.

---

[1] *garbhā va eta ukthānām yannividah* (A.B.III.10)

[2] *svargasya haiṣa lokasya roho yannivid* (A.B.III.16)

[3] Their position varies in the liturgy according to different libations. In the morning libation the Nivids are placed at the beginning of the litany, in the mid-day libation they are inserted in the middle of the hymn concerned and in the third libation their position is just before the last verse.

Now to come to the contents of the Nivids. Each Nivid is devoted to a Particular Deity who is described and invoked in those features and powers that are required to come into play at the appropriate stage of progress in the inner life (or outer worship) of the Vedic Yajamana. Thus the first to be invoked is Agni, the Flame of Aspiration and Will kindled by the Gods, *deveddhah*, sought after by men beginning with Manu, the quick bearer of the offerings of the human to the Divine and the conductor of the Gods hither to the altar of the Soul. Next is Indra, leader of the host of Maruts who are the battling powers of life-force reaching up to the light of the Mind, helping their Elder to slay the obstructive demons on the way and release the fertilising energies, Indra who glorifies the secret steps afar and whose favour is sought to lend his godly thought to the human endeavour.

Then follow in succession, Indra the God, drinker of the ambrosial wine of Delight, Soma, the God who has been here of his own accord after smashing the citadels of Falsehood with his Thunderbolt, bringing the bounty of Wealth ; God Savitr, bestower of Divine Wisdom, handsome with his beautiful tongue of speech, golden hands of action, chasing away the most obstinate unease, impelling the twin holders of Treasure ; Dyava-Prithivi, the ancient Father and Mother, the Divine Parents who together found the House of plenty for their progeny and protect its Call ; the Ribhus, divine artisans skilful with their hands, strongest of strength, who most laborious by labour went near the Gods at the close of the Year of their effort, and secure in their Godhood employ their skill to help man to repeat their achievement; the Vishvedevah, the All-Gods 3,003 in number (or are they more, asks the Nivid), who occupy with their limbs the Earth, the Waters, and the Heaven and united carry the ready and mobile Food; Agni the Fire Universal, Fuel of the Gods, omnipresent, the divine Light perpetual for the benefit of men and Gods; the glittering legions of Maruts, impetuous in their movement with the whole expanse of Life for their sphere, mighty in their roar, breaking down every barrier to the ascent, advancing in their heroic and invincible Chariot on the move; Agni Jatavedas, Knower of all births, the Flame omniscient, ever present in his splendid array in the Home of man where is lit; and again Lord Indra, intoxicated with the Delight consecrated by man, who in his irresistible fury kills Ahi the entwiner of the being of the seeker, exterminates Vrittra who holds back the energising Waters of life, sets the immobile mountains of inertia and inconscience leaping like antelopes, calms the agitated seas of vitality, raises the Sun of Truth on the horizon of the human soul and lifts up the Aryan Colours.

The author is to be congratulated on the thoroughness of his investigation into the background, the content and the language of the Nivids. It is pleasing the note that for linguistic interpretation he follows the Ashtadhyayi of Panini. One may not agree with all the conclusions of the learned author. The Nivids can indeed be taken to be of the earliest specimens of Indian prose but whether they antedate the hymns of the Rig Veda is still debatable. Also, for instance, his explanation of the Pani as notorious non-vedic people exploiting the Aryans in India is doubtful, to say the least, specially in the light of the numerous discoveries which have effectively exploded the myth of the white Aryans clashing with the black Dravidians etc. The author is right in holding that the hymns of the Veda are neither folk-poetry nor ballads as taken by some but represent the fruit of an earlier cultural and spiritual effort of the race.

Gayatri Upasana

*Gayatri** is a satisfying book. It is a happy combination of the best from the past with the most enlightened thought of the present. The author, Sri I. K. Taimni, has assimilated the pure essence of the agelong Indian Tradition, religious and spiritual, and in presenting his thoughts on an important aspect of it as represented in the *Gāyatri Upāsanā*, has made full use of his knowledge of modern advances in physical and mental sciences to demonstrate and bring home its essential soundness and universal applicability to all effort at individual perfection.

The Gayatri is one of the most significant prayers in the Hindu hymnal scriptures. It is the only Mantra which appears unchanged in all the four Vedas. The importance attached to the Gayatri in the Vedic tradition has led to the rise of several Gayatris in later times, notably in the Tantras and allied literature. The Gayatri Mantra which is the subject of this work is the tenth Rik in the 62nd Sukta of the Third Mandala of the Rig Veda. Cast in *gāyatri* metre of 24 syllables it is attributed to Rishi Vishvamitra and reads :

---

* ***Gayatri*, by I. K. Taimni. Pub. Ananda Publishing House, Lowther Rd., Allahabad.**

Tat savitur-vareṇayam bhargo devasya dhimahi,
dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt.

Or in English:

> **We meditate upon that excellent splendour of the Lord Savitr. May he activate our thoughts.**

Its place in the Hindu ritual is too well known to be emphasised. It is its spiritual significance, the way in which it holds light to the inner development of man and harnesses so many powers in creation in its mantric body, that is usually lost sight of and now brought out with convincing appeal by Sri Taimni. He points out that while there is a sufficient appreciation of the need of disciplines like Yoga for real self-culture and spiritual enlightenment, enough attention is not paid to the necessity of a minimum preparatory effort of purification and harmonisation of one's being for any serious endeavour in that direction. And it is here that the Gayatri Upasana plays a major role.

Before entering into the subject proper the author gives a helpful account of the rationale of the Mantra Sastra upon which is based the whole theory and practice of the Upasana. He writes:

> **The basic doctrine underlying Mantra Yoga is that all this hard and tangible universe which we see around us is made up only of different kinds of vibrations and energies working at different levels. The things which appear so solid and real are not what they seem but are merely the result of the interplay of different kinds of energies and consciousness. Vibration lies at the basis of form using the word form in its widest sense. The manifested universe is full of an infinite number and variety of forms which we cognise with our sense-organs, physical or superphysical. Each of these forms**

is produced by vibrations and can be changed by changing the vibration. This is particularly true of forms which are natural and are produced according to a pattern by forces of Nature working behind them such as a tree, a human body or a solar system.[1] ... That vibration is capable of producing forms can be illustrated very well by drawing a bow against the edge of a plate on which some sand is strewn. The vibration produced by the bow throws the sand particles into violent commotion and when these particles settle down beautiful patterns are formed depending upon the nature of the vibration.

Behind every living form there is a particular vibration which keeps the different components of the form together as an organic whole and when that vibration ceases the form falls apart. The Anahata Sabda heard by the sadhakas of certain schools of mysticism is such a vibration. These vibrations do not necessarily take place on the physical plane. They can take place on different planes, their nature depending upon the nature of the form and the life which ensouls that form... Another important principle... is that vibration not only lies at the basis of form but is also necessary for the manifestation of consciousness .. We become aware of the external world through vibrations of differnt kinds. Light vibrations produce visual sensations, sound vibrations the sensation of hearing and so on. If these vibrations are cut off completely the manifestation of consciousness on the physical plane will cease and it will recede into the next subtler vehicle as in the case of sleep... The fundamental fact we have to grasp and keep in our mind is that vibration, form and consciousness are related to one another in a very intimate manner and affect one another in all kinds of ways. This relation between the three is rooted in the primary process of manifestation from Reality... the whole manifested universe is essentially

---

[1] The author observes:

'Forms of an artificial nature produced by the haphazard interaction of natural forces or through human agency belong to a different category. Although these forms are maintained by the interaction of forces and vibrations taking place between their constituent atoms *there is no overall vibration* apart from these forces as in the case of vital organisms.

> the result of an all-inclusive and all-embracing vibration called Nada. This subtlest vibration can by its differentiation and sub-division give rise to an infinite variety of vibrations which underlie all phenomena of Nature and produce all kinds of forms. These forms of various degrees of complexity built up by long processes of evolution provide vehicles for consciousness and enable it to function on different planes in an infinite variety of ways and to affect or be affected by the phenomena of these planes.
>
> If vibration is related to both form and consciousness, it should be possible through its agency to produce different kinds of natural phenomena on the one hand and to bring about changes in consciousness on the other... Mantra Yoga is that branch of Yoga in which the powers hidden in certain combinations of sounds are utilised for the unfoldment of human consciousness. Japa which means physical or mental repetition of mantras produces vibrations on different planes and these vibrations affect the vehicles or koshas of the sadhaka and the changes produced in the vehicles make it possible for the sadhaka to reach his deeper layers of consciousness. The vibrations slowly rearrange the matter of the different vehicles and harmonise them in such a manner that new states of consciousness can manifest in these vehicles... The aim of all such mantras, in short, is to purify and harmonise the vehicles of the sadhaka so that they become increasingly sensitive to the subtler layers of his own spiritual consciousness. As he comes into contact with these he becomes increasingly aware of that Reality of which his own consciousness is a partial expression. (Ch. III)

In other words, the technique of the Mantra Sastra is to so use the power of Sound as to bring about changes in the states of one's own consciousness, to invoke and draw upon the higher States or Powers of Consciousness through the agency of Sound-powers which have affinity with or related to those higher formulations of the Supreme Consciousness. The ancients carried their researches into this science of Sound to a remarkable extent and to them were revealed, in course of their inner discipline, some of these key sounds or sound-bodies which they clothed in the nearest equivalents in human speech. These sounds, combinations of sounds, words, are the Mantras which are celebrated in the Vedas and the Tantras. They are either perceived or revealed or self-cultured in the depths of one's consciousness They are not, we have to note, 'constructed' after experimental permutations and combinations as stated by the author. A real Mantra is already formed before it reaches the level of the human consciousness; it arises in the being of the seer, *draṣṭā* when the 'constructing' mind is silent.

The Gayatri is one such Mantra of major importance. The prescribed form in which it is chanted is:

> *Om. Bhūr Bhuvaḥ Svaḥ. Tat savitur vareṇyam bhargo devasya dhīmahi, dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt.*

For purposes of study the author would divide the Mantra into three parts viz.,

1. The Pranava (Om) and the three *Mahā vyāhṛtis (bhūḥ, bhuvaḥ, svaḥ)*;
2. *Tat savituh vareṇyam bhargah devasya dhīmahi*;
3. *dhiyah yo nah pracodayāt.*

He points out:

> 'The purpose of the first part is to arouse in the vehicles of the sadhaka certain powers which prepare the ground for the effective functioning of the second and third parts. These powers are aroused through the agency of sound of vak which harmonises the vehicles and attunes them to the forces from the higher planes and thus makes it possible for the higher states of consiousness to manifest through them. The second

> part is meant to stimulate in the mind of the sadhaka an intense aspiration of determination to come in contact with the consciousness of the Savita the presiding Deity of our solar system. The third part is meant to bring about an attitude of self-surrender or atma-samarpana which is essential for the descent of Divine grace or Kripa.

Now to come to the meaning and word-significance of the Mantra; *Om* is the sound-symbol of Brahman, the nearest equivalent to the original Vibration, *Nadā*, which manifests the Brahman. *Brahmaṇo nediṣṭham pratīkam*. Through this unique Word of Call, the Supreme is invoked and adored excellently. *(Prakarṣena nūyate anena iti praṇavaḥ.)*

After the Supreme Divine, the Divinities that preside over the planes of existence in which we live are invoked for their Grace. They are the Gods, Agni presiding over earth—the domain of the Physical, Vayu over the Mid-region of Life-force, and Aditya over the Heavens of the Mind; and the words of Call, the Bija Mantras of each of these are the celebrated *vyahṛtis* viz. *bhūḥ*, *bhuvaḥ*, *svaḥ*. As these Deities are derived from Brahman, their respective words of Call, *vyāhṛtis*, also are derived from the Word of Brahman. The Chhandogya Upanishad narrates an interesting story on the subject (IV. 17):

> Prajapati brooded upon the worlds. And by the force of his brooding he extracted their essences, Agni from the Earth, Vayu from the Antariksha and Aditya from the Heaven.
>
> Upon these three Deities he brooded. And by the force of his brooding he extracted their essences; Riks from Agni, Yajus from Vayu and Samans from Aditya.

> Upon this threefold Knowledge he brooded. And by the force of his brooding he extracted their essences: Bhuh from the Riks, Bhuvah from Yajus and Svah from the Samans.

And elsewhere (II. 23) it records:

> Prajapati brooded upon the worlds. From them, by the force of his brooding issued forth the threefold knowledge. He brooded upon this. From it, so brooded upon, issued forth these syllables: *bhuh, bhuvaḥ, svaḥ*.
>
> He brooded upon them. From them, so brooded upon, issued forth the syllable Om.

Thus by the chant of the supreme Word of Call, Om, and the utterance of the three Mahavyahritis of Bhuh, Bhuvah, Svah, the Omnipresent Divine and the specific Divinities governing the spheres of existence of which man is a part are invoked, and the sadhaka puts himself in rapport with them. He awakes to an active awareness of the all-pervading Brahman, his will and aspiration stand energised, his life-energy quickened and his mental faculties alert at the remembrance of the gods, of their origin—Agni, Vayu and Aditya respectively. Thus prepared the sadhaka chants the main mantra. It begins:

> *Tat savitr vareṇyam bhargo devasya dhīmahi,*
>
> We meditate upon that excellent splendour of the Lord Savitr,

Savitr is the subject of invocation and meditation, Savitr, it must be noted, is not the physical sun in the sky as generally taken. Savitr is the Lord Creator whose glorious symbol in the universe is the solar orb we call the sun. The splendour of Savitr is the effulgence of the Divine Creative Energy which is active on all the many planes of Creation and figured and rendered by the Sun of each plane. That Savitr is not just the physical sun but is in fact a concentration of the Creative Power of the Divine which ushers in all creation and sustains all on its destined course is very evident from the utterances of the Vedic Rishis themselves. To the seers of the Veda who have bequeathed the Gayatri, He is the Prime Creator, Prajapati,[1] the One who releases (*su* to release, to loose forth, to deliver) the many into birth and manifestation; He is the Premier who is followed by other Gods. He has the sun for his lofty banner, *ūrdhva ketuh.*[2] He is well-expressed by the beams of the sun, *sūrya-raśmibhih samucyasi*. Thus hymns Seer Shyavashva:

> Knowing all phenomena he orders, sole the Energies of the sacrifice. Vast is the affirmation in all things of Savitr, the divine Creator. All forms he takes into himself, the Seer, and he creates from them good for the twofold existence and the fourfold. The Creator, the supreme God, manifests Heaven wholly and his light pervades all... In the wake of his march the other gods also reach by his force to the greatness of the Divinity. He has maped out the realms of earthly light by his mightiness,—the brilliant one the Divine Creator... And thou reachest, O Savitr, to the three luminous heavens; and thou art utterly expressed by the rays of the Sun... And thou art powerful for every creation; and thou becomest the Increasor, O God, by thy movings. (Rv. V. 81)

Sarvāntaryamitayā prerakasya jagatsrasṭuḥ, the Lord Creator who abides in all and guides all, says Sayana (Rv. III.62 10).

The author draws on some of the later texts and quotes from *Yajnavalkya Samhita* which says:

> 'The Light of lights, the superb Light which is hidden in the sun is there in the heart of creatures in the form of

---

[1] Vamadeva, IV. 53.

[2] Rv. IV. 14. 2.

> consciousness. The Light which shines in the outer sun broods in the ether of the Heart... The Glory that abides in the form of consciousness in the heart of creatures is also there aglow as the Person in the Sun of the sky.'[1]

Mark the words, the outer sun, *bāhya suryasya.* And he adds:

> The underlying principles of Gayatri Upasana point out that the physical Sun which we see and which alone Science has studied is merely an outer cover of a glorious Reality which pervades and energises the whole solar system... They indicate that this Reality is in essence and fundamentally the same as the Reality which is hidden in the heart of every human being... And lastly they bring out clearly that in finding this Reality within himself the sadhaka can invoke the Reality hidden behind the Sun, and through the help which he gets from this Supreme Source of spiritual illumination make his task of Self-discovery easier.

Then follows the fervent prayer: *dhiyah yo nah pracodayāt*, may he activate our thoughts.

We meditate upon the Supreme vivifier, the highest Director of all Intelligences in creation, we adore Him. May He guide, not merely guide, but activate and impel with His innate Knowledge and Power our highest faculties of Thought, our understandings and formulations, so that—as the Seer says in the succeeding Riks—with our mental consciousness developed in its full opulence, *purandhyā*, we may attain to the Bounty of the Lord of Plenty, and impelled by such illumined Thought, *dhiyā iśitah*, surrender ourselves unto the Lord, who, in the words of the Svetasvatara Upanishad:

---

[1] The author also quotes the famous verses (15 & 16) from the Isha Up. addressed to the Lord in the Sun.

> Yoking the gods (senses) heaven-aspiring, with the mind and the intelligence (so illumined), Savitr regenerates them to manifest the luminous vast Light.[1]

II

This Gayatri Mantra is not merely used for Japa and Meditation but forms part of several kinds of worship. Also the Gayatri itself is worshipped as the Gayatri Devi, the Shakti of Savitr. A significant ritual has thus grown around the Gayatri and our author describes in interesting detail the *Gayatri Upāsanā*, the prescribed mode and order for the practice of the inner and outer worship centred round the Mantra.

There is, first, the *Viniyoga Mantra*[2] which is recited giving the name of the Rishi, the Metre and the name of the Deity invoked. He explains:

> The Rishi of the mantra is that particular seer or adept who discovered or rather constructed it... or obtained it from a still higher source by means of tapasya... in reciting the viniyoga mantra we remember the Rishi not merely as a token of our gratitude to him but chiefly to put ourselves in touch with him and draw from him inspiration and force.
>
> The chhandas of a mantra defines its peculiar structure which may belong to anyone of a large number of types.

---

[1] *Yuktvaya manasā devān suvaryato dhiyā divam, Bṛhajjyotiḥ kariṣyataḥ savitā prasuvāti tān* (II. 3)

[2] ओंकारस्य ब्रह्मा ऋषिर्गायत्री छन्दोऽग्निर्देवता ।
महाव्याहृतीनां प्रजापतिर्ऋषिर्गायत्र्युष्णिगनुष्टुभश्छन्दांसि अग्नि-वाय्वादित्या देवताः ।
गायत्र्या विश्वामित्र ऋषिर्गायत्री छन्दः सविता देवता ।

> **Number plays the most important part in the science of chhandas because it underlines form and determines the nature of sound...**
>
> **The Devata of a mantra is the particular manifestation of Divine Consciousness whose power is expressed through the mantra and with whose consciousness the sadhaka wants to unite his own consciousness in japa.**

Discussing the *viniyoga* of the Gayatri, the author makes an interesting observation that the Rishis of the Pranava, the Maha-vyahritis and Gayatri being Brahma, Prajapati and Vishvamitra respectively according to the Viniyoga Mantra and Prajapati and Vishvamitra being also appellations of Brahma the Creator, the Rishi of the entire Gayatri can be taken to be Brahma; in any case it is not the Vishvamitra of the Puranas.

The chhandas of Pranava is *gāyatri*; of the three vyahritis, *Gāyatri*, *uṣṇik* and *anuṣṭup*; of the main gayatri mantra it is *gāyatri* (metre).

The Devatas are: of Pranava, Agni; of Bhuh, the first vyahriti, it is again Agni; of Bhuvah and Svah, the second and third vyahritis, the Devatas are Vayu and Aditya; of the main Gayatri, Savitr.

Prior to the invocation there is what is called the ritual of purification, *śuddhi*, which summons the various faculties of oneself to attention to the serious purpose on hand, separates the dross and cleanses the being, rendering it fit to commune with the Deities. Different mantras are used in different sects. Our author illustrates with three popular Mantras which are:

> In whatever condition a man is, whether pure or impure, he becomes purified, both externally and internally, the moment he turns his mind to Vishnu, the Lotus-eyed.[1]
>
> The seers ever behold the Supreme seat of Vishnu, like an eye extended in the heaven.[2]

In both the Mantras, it will be noted, the practicant, *upāsaka*, reminds himself that there is a higher State of Consciousness and Being beckoning to him whatever his present imperfections; he has only to aspire and direct his faculties to the Divine who effects, in His Grace, the necessary purification in his being enabling him to behold the revelation of His own Glory.

Next, the author cites a remarkably comprehensive Mantra[3] which in turn consists of four component Mantras:

> Om. Raising the Jiva Shiva from the mountain of bhutas along the Sushumna canal I unite him with that State which is called Parama Shiva.

---

[1] ओं अपवित्रः पवित्रो वा सर्वावस्थां गतोऽपि वा ।
यः स्मरेत पुण्डरीकाक्षं स बाह्याभ्यन्तरः शुचिः ॥

[2] ओं तद् विष्णोः परमम् पदम् सदा पश्यन्ति सूरयः दिवीव चक्षुराततम् ।

[3] ओं भूतशृङ्गाटाच्छिरः सुषुम्ना पथेन जीवशिवं परमशिवपदे योजयामि स्वाहा ।
ओं यं लिङ्गशरीरं शोषय शोषय स्वाहा ।
ओं रं सङ्कोचशरीरं दह दह स्वाहा ।
ओं परमशिव सुषुम्नापथेन मूलशृङ्गाटम्
उल्लस उल्लस ज्वल ज्वल प्रज्वल प्रज्वल सोऽहं हंसः स्वाहा ।

Svaha; *Svāh* denotes sankalpa, determination.

Om. Yam. Dry up, dry up the subtle body. Svah! (Prayer to Vayu Devata, *yam* being the bijakshara of Vayu).

Om. Ram. Burn, burn up the limiting bodies. (Prayer to Agni Devata, *ram* being the bijakshara of Agni)

Om. Paramashiva. Along the path of the Sushumna, on the mountain of matter, blow, blow upon, inflame, inflame, illumine, illumine. He am I, I am He, Svah.

(Prayer to Parama Shiva himself to send down His Breath of awakening, precipitation and release into a state of complete identification between the individual jivatma and the Paramatma.)

We do not enter here into the full import of the Mantra. It is a subject by itself and Sri Taimni has done justice to it in his able exposition of the fundamentals of the Kundalini Yoga as implied in the Mantra.

After the preparation comes Dhyana, meditation on the Devata. The Dhyana begins with a powerful call to the Devi, *āvāhana*, to appear. The Mantras cited here for the purpose are:

Om. O Goddess, come Thou showering Boons.
O Thou of three syllables, O Thou revealer of Brahman.
O Gayatri, mother of Chhandas, O Thou source of the Vedas, Salutations to Thee.[1]

Om. Come, boon-giving Goddess, and be present at my prayer.
Since Thou savest by being sung, therefore Thou art called Gayatri.[2]

---

[1] ओं आयाहि वरदे देवि त्र्यक्षरे ब्रह्मवादिनि ।
गायत्रि छन्दसां मातर्ब्रह्मयोने नमोऽस्तु ते ॥

[2] ओं आयाहि वरदे देवि जप्ये मे सन्निधौ भर ।
गायन्तं त्रायसे यस्माद् गायत्री त्वं ततः स्मृता ।

This is followed by contemplation of the Devi in the form in which it is laid down in the Dhyana-Mantra. Each Deity has its own Dhyana Mantra based upon the realisation of its seer and always verifiable in the experience of those who have the requisite competence. In the case of Gayatri, however, there is an interesting variation in the forms in which She is to be contemplated at different periods of the day. Gayatri

> 'is Brahmani in the morning, Vaishnavi at noon and Rudrani in the evening... Morning is the time when creative forces are predominant in Nature and as Brahma represents the creative functions of Ishwara it is his influence which can most profitably be sought by the sadhaka at this time. At noon it is the forces of preservation which are predominant and therefore Vishnu is the presiding Deity of this part of the Day. He is the Preserver who keeps in balance the forces of creation and destruction and it is therefore his influence which is invoked at this time of the day. In the evening it is the forces of destruction which become strong and since destruction is the function of Rudra naturally it is His influence which pervades Nature and can most profitably be utilised at this time.'

Here are the Dhyana Mantras for the morning, mid-day and the evening:

> Refulgent red as the rising sun, book and rosary in hand, the Brahmic force in deer-hide clad, such form think ye, while stars still shine.
>
> Azure-coloured and four-armed, conch and discus in each hand, club and lotus holding Goddess, seated in the Solar orb.
>
> White-hued, in snow-white garment clad, seated on the Bull of might, Three-eyed, with boon and bond in hand, with lance and drum armed.[1]

---

[1] उद्यादादित्य संकाशां पुस्तकाक्षकरां स्मरेत् ।
कृष्णजिनधरां ब्राह्मीं ध्यायेत् तारकितेऽम्बरे ॥

There is also, the author mentions, what may be called a universal Dhyana mantra which can be used at any time of the day irrespective of the period. It reads:

> White-complexioned they say is Gayatri in silken shining garment dressed,
>
> White sandal-paste perfumes her skin with flowers white and jewels decked,
>
> In solar orb her home you find, in Brahma-world also she dwells,
>
> With rosary in hand is she, on lotus flower auspicious one.[1]

The Dhyana on the *form* gradually melts into dhyana on the qualities, powers, nature etc., of the Personality behind the form. This is followed by Japa of the Gayatri Mantra.[2] The conclusion of the sitting is always signalised by the Visarjana or the Farewell Mantra e.g.

श्यामवर्णां चतुर्बाहुं शंखचक्रलसत्कराम् ।
गदापद्मकरां देवीं सूर्यासनकृताश्रयाम् ॥
शुक्लां शुक्लाम्बरधरां वृषासनकृताश्रयाम् ।
त्रिनेत्रां वरदां पाशं शूलञ्च नृकरोटिकाम् ॥

---

[1] श्वेतवर्णा समुद्दिष्टा कौशेयवसना तथा ।
श्वेतैविलेपनैः पुष्पैरलंकारैश्च भूषिता ॥
आदित्यमण्डलस्था च ब्रह्मलोकगता तथा ।
अक्षसूत्रधरा देवी पद्मासनगता शुभा ॥

[2] In an interesting passage of the Upanishads, it is stated that while japa of Gayatri in the evening destroys the *sin* done in the course of the day and japa in the morning destroys the sins of night, one who repates Gayatri at midnight attains fulfilment of speech. निशीथे तुरीयां सन्ध्यां जप्त्वा वाक्सिद्धिर्भवति ।

> O Goddess thou comest out of the mouth of Mahesa and dwellest in the heart of Vishnu, being ordered thereto by Brahma. Now depart wherever it pleases Thee.[1]

To sum up in the words of the author:

> After the avahan mantra has been recited and the mental image of the Ishta Devata has been formed, the next step is to meditate on the Ishta Devata for some time using the image merely as a focus of one's attention. This involves two processes. First, to form a clearly defined image and train the mind to keep it in the focus of consciousness without allowing it to slip away, as it is prone to do time and again. When the image can be held steadily in the mental focus for some time the second step is to start the activity of the mind in relation to the nature, powers and functions of the Ishta Devata against the background of the mental image. The sadhaka should try to go behind the purely physical form and understand the nature of the Ishta Devata as far as the mind will allow him to do so... the sadhaka must gradually acquire what may be called the technique of unveiling by constant effort the inner significance of the ideas and ideals which form the content of his meditation. This inner significance is not an idea but a state of consciousness of which the idea on the mental plane is merely like a faint or blurred reflexion. It is a thing to be realised and not thought about... meditation is followed by japa... the final aim of meditation and japa is the same, namely, to know the reality hidden behind the form or the mantra by the fusion of the sadhaka's consciousness with that of his Ishta Devata. (Ch. IX)

[1] ओं महेशवदनोत्पन्ना विष्णोहृदय सम्भवा ।
ब्रह्मणा समनुज्ञाता गच्छ देवि यथेच्छया ॥

The Veda and The Upanishad

Question: *Are the Vedic and the Upaniṣadic periods essentially one? Or are they different? Each Vedic mantra is compared to Upaniṣadic verses; hence some say that they are one.*

Answer: The Vedic Age predates history as we know it. The Rig Veda on the basis of which most historians proceed to determine the date and the conditions of the Vedic society is a representative document of only the last phase of the Vedic civilisation. And of even this period scholars dispute the age. Western Indologists have always shown a tendency to push it as near the Christian Era as possible whereas Indian savants like Tilak argue, on astrological and other bases, that it must be put back to at least 5 thousand B.C. We are inclined to place the Rig Vedic period somewhere here.

The period of the Upanishads (and Brahmanas) came long after the termination of the Vedic age. In fact it must have been after several centuries after the natural decline and fade out of the Vedic civilisation, that a powerful Movement for the Revival of the Vedic Tradition and legacy took birth. The Upanishads represent that aspect of the movement which aimed to revive the Knowledge element of the ancient heritage while the Brahmanas are an attempt to resuscitate the Ritual along with the underlying symbolism.

The Rishis of the Upanishads always recognised the paramount authority of the Seers of the Veda and took care at every step, to conform to the large lines of their realisations in the field of the Spirit in their own endeavour. That is why we find in many of these texts quotations from the Veda in support of the conclusions arrived at by the later Rishis by independent effort of their own. The Vedic Mantra is quoted to clinch the issue, to crown the argument. Even where the exact Mantra is not quoted, very much the same ideas are clothed in a language more suited to a later mentality. So there is no question of comparison. The Rishi of the Upanishad draws upon and supports himself on the endeavour of his forefather in the earlier age of the Veda.

APPENDIX

THE NIVIDS: TEXT

निविदध्यायः

अग्निर्देवेद्धः। अग्निर्मन्विद्धः। अग्निः सुषमित्। होता देववृतः। होता मनुवृतः। प्रणीर्यज्ञानाम्। रथीरध्वराणाम्। अतूर्तो होता। तूर्णिर्हव्यवाट्। आ देवो देवान् वक्षत्। यक्षदग्निर्देवो देवान्। सो अध्वरा करति जातवेदाः ॥ १ ॥

इन्द्रो मरुत्वान् सोमस्य पिबतु। मरुत्स्तोत्रो मरुद्गणः। मरुत्सखा मरुद्वृधः। घ्नन् वृत्रा सृतदपः। मरुतामोजसा सह। य ईमेनं देवा अन्वमदन्। असूर्ये वृत्रतूर्ये। शम्बरहत्ये गविष्टौ। अर्चन्तम् गुह्या पदा। परमस्यां परावति। आदीं ब्रह्माणि वर्धयन्। अनाधृष्टान्योजसा। कृण्वन् देवेभ्यो दुवः। मरुद्भिः सखिभिः सह। इन्द्रो मरुत्वाँ इह श्रवदिह सोमस्य पिबतु। प्रेमां देवो देवहूतिमवतु देव्या धिया। प्रेदं ब्रह्म प्रेदं क्षत्रम्। प्रेमं सुन्वन्तं यजमानमवतु। चित्रश्चित्राभिरूतिभिः। श्रवद् ब्रह्माण्यावसा गमत् ॥ २ ॥

इन्द्रो देवः सोमं पिबतु। एकजानां वीरतमः। भूरिजानां तवस्तमः। हर्योः स्थाता। पृश्नेः प्रेता। वज्रस्य भर्ता। पुरां भेत्ता। पुरां दर्मा। अपां स्रष्टा। अपां नेता। सत्वनां नेता। निजघ्निर्दूरेश्रवाः। उपमाजिकृद्दंसनावान्। इहोशन् देवो बभूवान्। इन्द्रो देव इह श्रवदिह सोमं पिबतु। प्रेमां देवो देवहूतिमवतु देव्या धिया। प्रेदं ब्रह्म प्रेदं क्षत्रम्। प्रेमं सुन्वन्तं

यजमानमवतु । चित्रश्चित्राभिरूतिभिः । श्रवद् ब्रह्माण्यावसा गमत् ॥ ३ ॥

सविता देवः सोमस्य पिबतु हिरण्यपाणिः सुजिह्वः । सुबाहुः स्वङ्गुरिः । त्रिरह्नन् सत्यसवनः । यत्प्रासुवद् वसुधिती उभे जोष्ट्री सवीमनि । श्रेष्ठं सावित्रमासुवन् । दोग्ध्रीं धेनुम् । वोत्हारमनड्वाहम् । आशुं सप्तिम् । जिष्णुं रथेष्ठाम् । पुरंधिं योषाम् । सभेयं युवानम् । परामीवां साविषत् पराघशंसम् । सविता देव इह श्रवदिह सोमस्य मत्सत् । प्रेमां देवो देवहूतिमवतु देव्या धिया । प्रेदं ब्रह्म प्रेदं क्षत्रम् । प्रेमं सुन्वन्तं यजमानमवतु । चित्रश्चित्राभिरूतिभिः । श्रवद् ब्रह्माण्यावसा गमत् ॥ ४ ॥

द्यावापृथिवी सोमस्य मत्सताम् । पिता च माता च । पुत्रश्च प्रजननं च । धेनुश्च ऋषभश्च । धन्या च दिषणा च । सुरेताश्च सुदुघा च । शंभूश्च मयोभूश्च ऊर्जस्वती च पयस्वती च । रेतोधाश्च रेतोभृच्च । द्यावापृथिवी इह श्रुतामिह सोमस्य मत्सताम् । प्रेमां देवी देवहूतिमवतां देव्या धिया । प्रेदं ब्रह्म प्रेदं क्षत्रमं । प्रेमं सुन्वंतं यजमानमवताम् । चित्रे चित्राभिरूतिभिः । श्रुतां ब्रह्माण्यावसा गमताम् ॥ ५ ॥

ऋभवो देवाः सोमस्य मत्सन् । विष्ट्वी स्वपसः । कर्मणा सुहस्ताः । धन्या धनिष्ठाः । शम्या शमिष्ठाः । शच्या शचिष्ठाः । ये धेनुं विश्वजुवं विश्वरूपामरक्षन् । अरक्षन् धेनुरभवद् विश्वरूपी । अयुंजत हरी । अयुर्देवाँ उप । अबुद्नन् सं कनीनामदन्तः । संवत्सरे स्वपसो यज्ञियं भागमायन् । ऋभवो देवा इह श्रवन्निह सोमस्य मत्सन् । प्रेमां देवा देवहूतिमवन्तु देव्या धिया । प्रेदं

ब्रह्म प्रेदं क्षत्रम्। प्रेमं सुन्वन्तं यजमानमवन्तु। चित्राश्चित्राभिरूतिभिः। श्रवन् ब्रह्माण्यावसा गमन् ॥ ६ ॥

विश्वे देवाः सोमस्य मत्सन्। विश्वे वैश्वानराः। विश्वे विश्वमहसः। महि महान्तः। तवकान्ना नेमधितीवानः। आस्क्राः पचतवाहसः। वात आत्मानो अग्निजूताः। ये द्यां च पृथिवीं चातस्थुः। अपश्च स्वश्च। ब्रह्म च क्षत्रं च। बर्हिश्च वेदिं च। यज्ञं चोरु चान्तरिक्षाम् ये स्थ त्रय एकादशाः। त्रयश्च त्रिंशाश्च। त्रयश्च त्री च शता। त्रयश्च त्री च सहस्रा। तावन्तोभिषाचः। तावन्तो रातिषाचः। तावतीः पत्नीः। तावतीर्ग्नाः। तावन्त उद्रणे। तावन्तो निवेशने अतो वा देवा भूयांसः स्थ। मा वो देवा अतिशसा मा परिशसा विक्षि। विश्वे देवा इह श्रवन्निह सोमस्य मत्सन्। प्रेमां देवा देवहूतिमवन्तु देव्या धिया। प्रेदं ब्रह्म प्रेदं क्षत्रम्। प्रेमं सुन्वंतं यजमानमवन्तु। चित्राश्चित्राभिरूतिभिः। श्रवन् ब्रह्माण्यावसा गमन् ॥ ७ ॥

अग्निर्वैश्वानरः सोमस्य मत्सत्। विश्वेषां देवानां समित्। अजस्रं दैव्यं ज्योतिः। यो विड्भ्यो मानुषीभ्योऽदीदेत्। द्युषु पूर्वासु दिद्युतानः। अजर उषसामनीकें। आ यो द्यां भात्या पृथिवीम्। ज्योतिषा यज्ञाय शर्म यंसत्। अग्निर्वैश्वानर इह श्रवदिह सोमस्य मत्सत्। प्रेमां देवो देवहूतिमवतु देव्या धिया। प्रेदं ब्रह्म प्रेदं क्षत्रम्। प्रेमं सुन्वन्तं यजमानमवतु। चित्रश्चित्राभिरूतिभिः। श्रवद् ब्रह्माण्यावसा गमत् ॥ ८ ॥

मरुतो देवाः सोमस्य मत्सन्। सुष्टुभः स्वर्काः। अर्कस्तुभो बृहद्वयसः। शूरा अनाधृष्टरथा त्वेषासः पृश्निमातरः। शुभ्रा

हिरण्यखादयः। तवसो भन्ददिष्टयः। नभस्या वर्षनिर्णिजः। मरुतो देवा इह श्रवन्निह सोमस्य मत्सन्। प्रेमां देवा देवहूतिमवन्तु देव्या धिया। प्रेदं ब्रह्म प्रेदं क्षत्रम्। प्रेमं सुन्वन्तं यजमानमवन्तु। चित्राश्चित्राभिरूतिभिः। श्रवन् ब्रह्माण्यावसा गमन् ॥९॥

अग्निर्जातवेदाः सोमस्य मत्सत्। स्वनीकश्चित्रभानुः। अप्रोषिवान् गृहपतिस्तिरस्तमांसि दर्शतः। घृताहवन ईड्यः। वहृतवर्त्मास्तृतयज्वा। प्रतीत्या शत्रून् जेतापराजितः। अग्ने जातवेदोऽभिद्युम्नमभि सह आयवस्व। तुशो अप्तुशः। समिद्धारं स्तोतारमंहसस्पाहि। अग्निर्जातवेदा इह श्रवदिह सोमस्य मत्सत्। प्रेमां देवो देवहूतिमवतु देव्या धिया। प्रेदं ब्रह्म प्रेदं क्षत्रम्। प्रेमं सुन्वन्तं यजमानमवतु। चित्रश्चित्राभिरूतिभिः। श्रवद् ब्रह्माण्यावसा गमत् ॥ १० ॥

अस्य मदे जरितरिन्द्रः सोमस्य मत्सत्। अस्य मदे जरितरिन्द्रोऽहिमहन्। अस्य मदे जरितरिन्द्रो वृत्रमहन्। अस्य मदे जरितरिन्द्रोऽपां वेगमैरयत्। अस्य मदे जरितरिन्द्र उदार्यं वर्णमतिरदव दासीद् विशो अस्तभ्नात्। अस्य मदे जरितरिन्द्र उद् द्यामस्तभ्नादप्रथयत् पृथिवीम्। अस्य मदे जरितरिन्द्रो दिवि सूर्यमैरयद् व्यन्तरिक्षमतिरत्। अस्य मदे जरितरिन्द्रः समुद्रान् प्रकुपिताँ अरम्णात्। अस्य मदे जरितरिन्द्र इह श्रवदिह सोमस्य मत्सत्। प्रेमां देवो देवहूतिमवतु देव्या धिया। प्रेदं ब्रह्म प्रेदं क्षत्रम्। प्रेमं सुन्वन्तं यजमानमवतु। चित्रश्चित्राभिरूतिभिः। श्रवद् ब्रह्माण्यावसा गमत् ॥ ११ ॥

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shri M. P. Pandit belongs to Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry, which he joined in 1939. He is closely associated with the activities of the Ashram and has been one of its stalwarts in interpreting Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to the world at large. He is the author of several books and editor of a Kannada journal and reviews the latest religious and philosophic literature in the columns of most of the important periodicals in India.

BOOKS BY M. P. PANDIT

- Mystic Approach to the Veda and the Upanishad
- Aditi and other Deities in the Veda
- The Upanishads
- Lights on the Tantra
- Kundalini Yoga
- Japa
- Dhyana
- Grace of the Great and other Essays
- Sri Aurobindo: Studies in the Light of His Teaching
- The Teaching of Sri Aurobindo
- Highways of God
- Where the Wings of Glory brood
- Sadhana in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga
- Lamps of Light